DIVERSIONS OF A DIPLOMAT IN CEYLON

BY

PHILIP K. CROWE

WITH A FOREWORD BY

VISCOUNT SOULBURY

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For my four girls

IRENE
PHILLIPPA
RENE
MARY

FOREWORD

BY

VISCOUNT SOULBURY, P.C., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., O.B.E., M.C.

AT the beginning of this book the author describes our first meeting in September 1953 at Queen's House, Colombo, where, as Ambassador of the United States of America to Ceylon, he presented his credentials to me, as the Governor-General of Ceylon and the representative of Her Majesty The Queen. That was, of course, an extremely formal occasion, but it was the prelude to a very warm personal friendship.

During my residence in Ceylon and after I had left in the summer of 1954, Mr. Crowe was kind enough to let me see from time to time accounts which he had written of his expeditions to the jungle and game reserves and his notes upon various historical and social features of the Island. They seemed to me to be so interesting and informative that I was delighted to learn later on that he proposed to collect and publish them and, needless to say, I was much flattered by his request that I should write this foreword.

Rather more than half of this book deals with the wild animals of Ceylon: elephant, bear, leopard, boar, buffalo and deer; with the fish in the rivers, lakes and sea and with the birds. The author has shot and fished in many parts of the world and there can be few men better qualified to describe the pursuit of game. His sporting activities have ranged almost literally 'from China to Peru' and, incidentally, he has hunted with the Pytchley in England and been master of his own pack of beagles in Maryland, U.S.A.

Whilst we were together in Ceylon, I was unhappily never able to accompany him upon his expeditions, but I had made trips to the two game reserves that he visited and

his vivid account of them has brought back to my mind the memory of some of the loveliest scenery in the world and of some of the best companions, for I note amongst the names of those who accompanied him several friends who went with me.

My own few visits to the jungle were, of course, tame affairs compared with the author's; I had not sufficient skill or experience or stamina, or indeed nerve, to emulate his adventures. My chief pleasure was to find some quiet shady spot from which I could watch the wild animals through field-glasses and at a reasonably safe distance.

Ceylon is a naturalist's paradise. The variety and beauty of the birds, butterflies, trees and flowers are indescribable. There can be no happier hunting-ground in the world for the ornithologist and botanist. Every student of the animal and bird life of Ceylon will be delighted by this book, and those who are interested in the history, traditions and customs of the Ceylonese people will get from it a clearer and more intelligible conception than from many a formal treatise on those subjects, and a more readable one.

Edward Gibbon, in his great history, makes mention of a Chinese Emperor who 'describes as a poet the pleasures which he had often enjoyed as a sportsman'. Mr. Crowe has not employed poetry to describe his pleasures, but his readers will enjoy the agreeable and attractive prose in which his descriptions are written.

LONDON
January 1956

PREFACE

As American Ambassador to Ceylon, it was one of my most pleasant duties to meet and get to know all types of the Ceylonese peoples, and the inhabitants of that lovely Island being scattered over some 25,000 square miles, this entailed a good deal of travel. In the past three years I have flown over much of the Island, travelled its railroads and motored on virtually all the motorable roads ; I have jeeped hundreds of miles across the trackless jungles, canoed down the Mahaweli Ganga, the Island's longest river, and visited some of the remotest islands off the coast, including the Maldives, the Moslem Sultanate lying some four hundred miles south-west of Ceylon in the Indian Ocean.

Often fatiguing but always rewarding, these journeys have given me an insight into the minds and customs of the peoples and have permitted a close study of the Island's wonderful fauna and flora. Ninety per cent of Ceylon's eight million people live in villages where they cultivate the soil or fish the lagoons and seas, and it is in conjunction with the jungles, the rivers and the oceans that they can best be understood. The fact that I like to shoot and fish and was able to enjoy these pursuits at the same time made my journeys to the out-of-the-way places even more interesting, for it is easier to get to know the hunters of the Wanni if you hunt with them, and easier to understand the fishermen of the coast if you sail with them in their fragile outriggers.

Many of the articles in this book have been previously published, and I must thank *The Field* of London, the *Anglers' Club Bulletin* of New York, the *Explorers' Journal* of New York, the *Journal* of the Bombay Natural History

Society, *Loris* of Colombo, *The Times of Ceylon*, *The Ceylon Observer*, *The Ceylon Fortnightly Review* and the *New Lanka* of Colombo for permission to reprint articles which have appeared in their pages.

Many people helped me to gather the material for this book, but I am particularly indebted to Dr. Chandra Gooneratne, of my Embassy staff, and William Abeysekera, Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department of the Ceylon Government, my companions on many of my jungle trips. I am also indebted to Dr. Raghavan, the anthropologist of the Colombo Museum, and Dr. R. L. Spittel, the author and historian of the Veddahs, for their advice about the Island's primitive peoples.

For invaluable help in the actual making of the book, I owe a great deal to Major W. W. A. Phillips, Ceylon's leading naturalist, who edited the text; to Dr. Paul Deraniyagala, Director of the National Museums of Ceylon, for his excellent illustrations; and Miss Helen Oxford for her patience and assistance.

And lastly, my thanks are due to Viscount Soulbury, former Governor-General of Ceylon, for his kindness in writing the Foreword to this volume and his continued interest in my writings.

PHILIP K. CROWE

COLOMBO
March 1956

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Chapter I

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

ONE of the first letters that I received after taking up my post in Colombo was one from New York addressed to me at the 'American Consulate, Ceylon, India'. The error was amusing but significant. At that time, September 1953, many well-educated and even far-travelled Americans had only the haziest ideas about Ceylon. Owing mainly to the television efforts of Lipton's Arthur Godfrey, however, they knew the Island produced the world's finest tea. They also remembered, from their geography lessons, that Ceylon was located near India and apparently assumed it must be a part of that country.

Since that time, America and the world have heard a good deal more about Ceylon. In April of 1954, Elizabeth II, Queen of Ceylon, paid her historic visit to the Island, and in April 1955 Sir John Kotelawala made his courageous speech at Bandung. That the Prime Minister of a small country would dare to attack Red imperialism before the bar of twenty-nine Afro-Asian nations, was front-page news all over the free world. There was no longer any confusion about Ceylon. The world knew that she was a self-governing Dominion of the British Commonwealth of Nations and that her Prime Minister was willing to call a spade a spade even if it was a red one.

These events, however, have little to do with this book; it is not a political book nor an assessment of Ceylon's place in the free world. It is a book about the people, mostly little people, and the manner in which they live

and the places in which they have their being. It is about the animals and the birds in the jungles, those I hunted and those I observed, about the fish in the tanks,[1] the rivers, the estuaries and in the warm seas around the Island. And lastly, it is about the Island itself and something of its history.

First, let us look at the land. Hanging like a jewelled pendant from the south-east coast of India, Ceylon, with a total area of 25,332 square miles, is just about the size of West Virginia and a shade smaller than Eire. Its extreme length, from Point Pedro at 9 degrees 51 minutes north latitude, to Dondra Head at 5 degrees 55 minutes, is 271½ miles; and its extreme width from Colombo at 79 degrees 41 minutes east longitude, to Sangemankande at 81 degrees 54 minutes, is only 137½ miles. About one-sixth of the Island is mountainous and this area of 4,212 square miles in the southern part of the Island is known as the Kandyan highlands. These are the lush well-watered uplands where the tea is grown. The other five-sixths is low country, ranging from the arid palmyra-dotted deserts of the north to the humid coconut and rubber plantations of the maritime provinces in the south-west. The contrast between the low and the high country is dramatic. From the steaming capital of Colombo on the west coast to the hill station of Nuwara Eliya is only 125 miles, but the latter is over a mile high, invariably cool and sometimes frosty. Or, to put it another way, a keen fisherman could catch a parava in the tepid Indian Ocean at dawn and a rainbow trout in an icy-cold mountain stream at sunset.

One of the ancient races of Asia, the Sinhalese trace their origins back to the dim beginnings of recorded history. The earliest known inhabitants of the Island, however, are the Veddahs, a primitive aboriginal type, a

[1] These tanks are actually artificial lakes ranging from a few to many hundreds of acres. Built centuries ago when the dry area of the Island was under cultivation, they still hold water for a part of the year.

few of whose mixed descendants can still be found in the remote jungles of eastern Ceylon. According to legend, the Veddahs built a capital called Kankapura and were subsequently overthrown by the Yakkas, or devils, and the Nagas, or snake-worshippers. These primitive civilizations have left virtually no tangible evidence behind them and it is not till the advent in 543 B.C. of Vijaya, the Indian conqueror, that the history of the Island takes on some semblance of substance.

The story of Vijaya's landing is eloquently expounded in the *Mahawansa*, the great epic poem of Ceylon, which covers the Island's history from the conqueror's landing to A.D. 1758. One of the most remarkable documents in the world, the *Mahawansa* records in detail the reigns of fifty-four kings of the Great Dynasty and one hundred and eleven of the Sulawansa or Lesser Race. Before its translation by Gallé, the Buddhist priest, and Turnour, the Englishman, in 1826, this record of over two thousand years of Ceylonese history was known only to a handful of Buddhist prelates.

The authentic history of Ceylon begins with the reign of Devanampiya Tissa (247–207 B.C.) and the conversion of the people to the Buddhist faith. The great Indian Emperor, Asoka, had embraced Buddhism and one of his principal objects in life was to spread the light. Accordingly he sent his son, Mahinda, to Tissa's court and later his daughter, Sanghamita, who brought with her a branch of the sacred bo tree under which Gautama had attained Buddhahood. This sprig was planted at Anuradhapura and can still be seen today, the oldest known living tree in the world.

Since those days, Buddhism has been the dominant religion of the Island and the faith of the majority of the population, although the great ecclesiastical cities of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa were repeatedly destroyed by Tamil invasions from south India and there were long

periods when Buddhism existed only in the remote districts of the south. Today, the Tamils of the Hindu faith are concentrated mainly in the north and east of the Island, while the Buddhists are strongest in the Kandyan highlands.

In early historical times, Ceylon was well known to the Mediterranean world. Megasthenes, Greek Ambassador to the court of the Hindu Chandragupta, who ruled three centuries before Christ, had heard of the Island and called it Palaeogoni. In the reign of the Roman Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41–54), a King of Ceylon sent an embassy to Rome, and in the second century A.D. Ptolemy, the astronomer and geographer, engraved his famous map of Taprobane, as Ceylon was later known. There is reason to believe that one of the coastal cities of the Island was the fabled Tarshish with which Solomon used to trade. Coins of all these countries have been dug up in Ceylon and there are today many descendants of the Moorish traders who came in the ninth century.

However, it was not until the early days of the sixteenth century that Europeans again took an actfve interest in Ceylon. On November 15, 1505, the Portuguese Admiral Dom Lourenço de Almeida landed at Colombo and carved his nation's arms on the first available rock. His arrival caused vast admiration and much fear among the inhabitants. According to the *Rajavaliya*, the people reported to King Vira Parakrama Bahu VIII that 'a race of people with fair skin and comely withal have come. They don iron jackets and hats of iron; they eat hunks of stone (probably hard bread) and drink blood (undoubtedly red wine); they give gold and silver for one fish or a lime.' Later, the Portuguese envoys called on the king and, having been promised a tribute of cinnamon, took the king under Portuguese 'protection'. This was the first move in a series of alliances, intrigues and wars that were to make Portugal the dominant power in the Island for the next one hundred and fifty years and to result in the forced

baptism of great numbers of islanders in the Catholic religion. It is interesting to note that there are some 800,000 Catholics in Ceylon today and that they comprise the third most important religious group of the Island.

On June 24, 1658, the last Portuguese governor, Antonio de Amaral de Menezes, surrendered the fort at Jaffna after a heroic resistance of three months, and the era of Dutch power had begun. The King of Kandy at that time was Rajasinha II who imprisoned the English sea captain Robert Knox for twenty years. Knox's book, *An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon in the East Indies*, printed in London in 1681, gives a fascinating description of life under that despotic and tyrannical monarch. A first edition of it, illustrated with woodcuts, shows men impaled on stakes and being trodden under elephants. Dutch rule lasted for 138 years and is commemorated today by Roman Dutch Law, the Burgher community and a great number of fine old forts such as those at Jaffna and Galle.

British influence began with the surrender at Colombo of the last Dutch governor, Van Angelbeek, on February 15, 1796, but it was not until the capture of the last Kandyan king, Sri Wikrama Rajasinha, on February 18, 1815, that the Island came completely under the control of the British Crown. The sequence of events from that date to November 11, 1947, when the late Prime Minister, D. S. Senanayake, countersigned a Bill granting the Island status as a fully sovereign member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, is too well known to require repetition, but I think it is safe to say that the Crown's position in the affection of the Ceylonese people has never been firmer. Ceylon is, in fact, almost alone in this allegiance amongst Britain's former Asiatic possessions. Burma refused to join the Commonwealth and is now a Republic; India, while a member of the Commonwealth and acknowledging the Queen as Head of it, is also a Republic; and Pakistan,

although still a Dominion, has signified that it also wishes to become a Republic within the Commonwealth.

With such a background of immigration and invasion, it is not surprising that the population of Ceylon today is a mixed one. According to the last census, that of 1953, Sinhalese still hold the balance of power and 5,621,332 of the total population of 8,098,637 are members of the Lion Race; but there are also 908,705 Ceylon Tamils, 984,237 Indian Tamils, 468,146 Ceylon Moors, 28,736 Malays, 43,916 Burghers, 5,886 Europeans, and even a few hundred jungle dwellers with some Veddah blood in their veins.

The Ceylon Tamils are citizens of the country and are concentrated mainly in Jaffna and the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The Indian Tamils consist largely of labourers on the tea estates and a great many of them are not citizens. Whether they will be given citizenship or be forced to return to India is still a matter of negotiation between India and Ceylon. The Ceylon Moors are Tamil-speaking Moslems who came originally to the Island as traders and in most cases have been there for many generations. The Malays are the descendants of the Malay mercenaries imported by the Dutch and British, and the Burghers are descendants of the Dutch who remained when the British took over the government.

The Sinhalese speak Sinhalese and the Tamils speak Tamil, while most of the educated classes of both races, as well as the Burghers, speak English. Trilingualism is almost a necessity for a politician or a business man and may soon be mandatory for an appointment in the Civil Service.

The Queen reigns over Ceylon in the same sense that she reigns over the United Kingdom, but as she cannot reside on the Island, she is represented by her Governor-General who, during the first year of my tour of duty, was Lord (now Viscount) Soulbury. An ambassador does not

take over officially until he has presented his credentials to the Queen's representative, so my first official act was to call upon His Excellency.

At ten o'clock on September 19, 1953, my senior staff, consisting of Bernard Gufler, my Counsellor of Embassy, Commander Nixdorff, my Naval Attaché, and John Plakias, my First Secretary, together with their wives, met me at my house. The men wore morning coats, and the ladies hats and gloves. At ten-fifteen, three Rolls-Royces, provided by the Ceylon Government, drove up to the door and out stepped Mr. Alfred Edwards, the Chief of Protocol — a pleasant young man, who admitted to me that I was his first ambassadorial presentation; I assured him that the ceremony was equally new to me. We then climbed in the first car and, with a police car leading the way and motor cyclists flanking us, set off for Queen's House, the official residence of the Governor-General. At the entrance we were met by the Second Extra A.D.C., a handsome Ceylonese officer, ablaze with medals and carrying a beautiful gilt sword, who conducted us to the drawing-room. There we were introduced to Colonel Rose, the Governor-General's private secretary, who gave us our last-minute instructions. To make matters simple, he had thoughtfully marked the floor with chalk so that there could be no doubt as to where everyone would stand during the ceremony. At this point I was introduced to Sir Kanthiah Vaithianathan, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs, and to Mr. T. Rajathurai, Assistant Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs.

Then we marched into the ballroom in formation; I was preceded by the two A.D.C.s and followed by my own staff. At the far end was a chair on a dais from which the Governor-General rose and waited to receive me. We shook hands, and I presented to him my letter of credence and another letter announcing the recall of Ambassador Satterthwaite, my predecessor. I then stepped backwards

two paces and read a short speech. The Governor-General replied with another short speech and it was over.

In the reception room to which we repaired for champagne after the ceremony, I had my first opportunity for an informal talk with His Excellency and incidentally my first chance to take a good look at him. I saw a trim-figured, white-haired gentleman with the bearing of a soldier, enlivened by the kindly twinkle of a man of the world. From his shining, spurred boots to his firmly attached monocle, Lord Soulbury was exactly my idea of what a Governor-General should be. Instinctively I liked him, and as time went on, grew to respect his judgment and rely on his advice.

This chat marked the beginning of a friendship that lasted long after Lord Soulbury completed his term as Governor-General and retired to England, where he now sits in the House of Lords and has a nice reach on one of the best trout rivers in the kingdom. Fishing was always a bond between us and we enjoyed several pleasant week-ends with him at Queen's Cottage at Nuwara Eliya, where he had the ponds well stocked with brown and rainbow trout.

As I mentioned above, however, one of the major political events in the Island's history during my tour of duty there was the Queen's visit, which I shall now describe in detail.

Escorted by flag-dressed warships of the British and Ceylonese navies and heralded by a medley of sirens and whistles from every vessel in the harbour, the white steamer, *Gothic*, slid slowly to her berth at the new quay at Colombo. It was eight o'clock of the clear hot morning of Saturday, April 10, 1954, the long-awaited day when Elizabeth II, Queen of Ceylon, would pay her first visit to the green Island of Lanka.

The setting, planned to the last detail for months in advance, was dignified and attractive. Two long marquees

had been erected on either side of a carpeted walk so that the guests could sit comfortably out of the sun and, what was even more important, obtain fine views of Her Majesty when she and the Duke walked up the central approach. The places of honour, that is, those nearest the disembarkation stairs of the ship, were allotted to the leading Buddhist priests on the one side and the Cabinet and the Diplomatic Corps on the other. Dress consisted of the yellow robes and shaved heads for the bhikkus (the priests), sherwanis (long Indian coats and jodhpurs) for the Cabinet, and morning coats, decorations and grey top-hats for us. The priests wore the coolest dress.

Despite a welcome breeze from the harbour, the thermometer hovered in the nineties when we arrived at our seats at seven-thirty a.m. and it was nine before the drums rolled, twenty-one guns thundered from the saluting battery, and the Queen, followed by the Duke, walked down the landing stairs, to be received by the Governor-General, Lord Soulbury, the Prime Minister, Sir John Kotelawala, and members of the Cabinet.

After chatting a few moments, she proceeded up the central walk and we all had a close view of a very lovely lady. Sir Cecil Syers, the British High Commissioner, was standing next to me and I could not help noticing a little moisture in his right eye.

At four in the afternoon, the Cabinet and the Diplomatic Corps gathered at Queen's House for a formal presentation. The men wore morning coats without decorations, and the ladies afternoon dresses and long white gloves. Gunesena de Soyza, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gave us a brief description of the form. We would line up according to rank: Cabinet Ministers, Ambassadors and High Commissioners, and Ministers, Chargés, etc. Wives would walk on the right side of husbands but be presented after them. Forty minutes later, Major Eric Venn, the Governor-General's

military aide, announced Her Majesty, who, followed by the Duke, took a position at the end of the throne room. The Prime Minister then introduced his Cabinet.

The Queen appeared much thinner than her pictures and is prettier. She has a lovely complexion and an expressive smile. Her hair is a pretty light brown and her eyes are a deep blue. When she speaks to people, she gives them her complete attention, and what could be more flattering ?

After the formal presentation, we repaired to the reception room where tea was served and the Queen, escorted by the Governor-General, moved about the room and talked with the assembly. The Queen asked me about my children and was interested in their riding. She also said she had heard that I served in England during part of the war and asked me where I was stationed. The Duke and I later had quite a long talk, in the course of which he asked me about the American diplomatic service and the sporting possibilities of the Island. He is a keen polo player and tries to get exercise wherever possible. He has an ease of manner that makes talking to him both pleasurable and effortless.

When the first Elizabeth travelled in her realm, she took a vast assembly of courtiers and retainers, but times have changed and the present Queen got along fine with only ten. Her two ladies-in-waiting, Lady Pamela Mountbatten and Lady Alice Egerton, were both attractive and vivacious girls. I particularly enjoyed Lady Alice, who hunts with the Duke of Buccleuch and is a friend of Rene Haig.

The state ball was held at Queen's House, the old Dutch palace where the Governors of Ceylon have resided since the early years of the nineteenth century. Some two thousand guests had been invited, and the trees of the lawn glowed with lights. There were two bands and a special crown-topped pavilion where the Queen and her court were to sit. The order was full evening dress with decora-

tions for men, and evening dress and long white gloves for ladies, and I must say Colombo really put on its best. The Diplomatic Corps, augmented by many Ambassadors and Ministers who are accredited to Ceylon as well as to India but make their homes in Delhi, made a brave show. Sparkling with stars and orders, most of my colleagues looked like miniature Christmas trees.

At ten-thirty a ruffle of drums announced the advent of Her Majesty, who then made a round of the tables escorted by Lord Soulbury. She wore a dazzling white dress whose details I am not competent to report. She also wore the blue ribbon of the Garter, a gorgeous diamond necklace and a diamond coronet.

Just as the Queen had settled inside her pavilion, an ominous burst of thunder was heard and a moment later great drops of rain splashed from the heavens. Everyone tried to act as if nothing was happening; the band continued to play and dancers remained on the ballroom floor, but it poured and the party had to end.

No provision was made for children under eighteen to attend functions, but my daughter Phillippa looked eighteen and by special permission of the Prime Minister I arranged for her to attend his garden party on Sunday afternoon. Since Irene and I had already been presented, we could not take her to this reception but arranged for Dr. and Mrs. Chandra Gooneratne of the Embassy to escort her. Chandra is a close friend of the Prime Minister and, I knew, would get Phillippa the best possible opportunity to see the Queen.

Earlier in the day Mary, my youngest daughter, who had been taken by her nanny to a balcony overlooking the Queen's route, had a good view of the procession and told me, 'The Queen waved hard at me!'

At this point I must say something of the gala appearance of Colombo itself. The routes were decorated with many coloured standards, and sixteen arches, known as

pandals, were erected along the various processional avenues. Every available foot of frontage on these avenues was used to build grand-stands which were, in turn, hung with Lanka Lion flags and Union Jacks. At night, all of the principal buildings were lit with a blaze of coloured lights. The arrangements for the decoration of my own Embassy were in the hands of my stepmother, Mary Crowe, who had thought up and had executed a handsome gold-leaf arrangement with the letters E–R in the centre. Two floodlights played on it during the night. Both the Duke and Lady Pamela Mountbatten mentioned it to me as an outstanding decoration.

Early on Monday morning, April 12, Irene, my stepmother Mamie and I gathered at the Senate Building for the muster before the processional drive to the Independence Memorial Hall where the Queen was to open Parliament.

At the appointed time we all boarded our cars and, with flags flying, drove through the cleared and crowd-lined streets to the Hall. Every ten feet a soldier with fixed bayonet guarded the route, but seemed unnecessary, for never have I seen a more orderly crowd. The Hall is an open-pillared memorial to Ceylon's independence, whose architecture reminds one of a temple. At one end of the central court were arranged two thrones and facing them the seats of the Government, Diplomatic Corps and other persons of note. The ceilings and pillars were decorated with miles of cotton cloth puckered to simulate Buddhist flower designs. Behind the thrones was displayed the Lion flag of Lanka.

As the Queen arrived, twenty-one guns boomed, the guard of honour snapped to attention, and the *magul bera*, the ancient Sinhalese drum salute, accompanied by the gentle blowing of conch shells, was heard. The royal party, preceded by the Gentleman Usher, the Clerk of the Senate, Leader of the Senate, President of the Senate,

Sergeant-at-Arms, Clerk of the House, Leader of the House, Speaker of the House and the Prime Minister, then arrived. Accompanying the Queen and the Duke were her two ladies-in-waiting and the Duke's two aides. The Queen wore her Coronation gown, a dazzling tiara of diamonds, a diamond necklace and diamond earrings. The Duke wore an admiral's uniform and the Order of the Garter.

Colour was far from lacking in the assembly: the bishops in their purple robes, the judges of the Supreme Court in scarlet and ermine, the gold-ornamented uniforms of the Mudaliyars and the gorgeous costumes of the Kandyan chiefs. Added to this rainbow gathering were the multi-coloured saris of the ladies and the blazing uniforms and decorated, full evening dress of the Diplomatic Corps.

The ceremony itself was impressive. The Queen opened the proceedings by saying, 'Pray be seated.' Her Majesty's Ceylonese Equerry, Colonel Christie Jayawardana, then read the proclamation summoning Parliament. The Prime Minister advanced to the throne, gave Her Majesty the speech and retired. The Queen read the speech in a modulated but clear voice. Like all such speeches from the throne it was, of course, drafted for her by the Government in power.

The Prime Minister then asked, 'Is it convenient to Your Majesty to receive addresses of thanks from the two Houses immediately?' The Queen replied, 'Mr. Prime Minister, it is convenient.' Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, the Leader of the Senate and Minister of Finance, then thanked Her Majesty for the many benefits derived from her rule and congratulated her on the manner in which she gave Ceylon her independence. J. R. Jayawardana, Minister of Agriculture and Food and leader of the House of Representatives, then made one of the most distinguished speeches of his distinguished career.

In the afternoon, the Queen, who has always been fond

of racing, graciously accepted the invitation of the Ceylon Turf Club to attend the last three races of the day. The Queen came in a closed car, owing to lowering skies, but was preceded by a company of cavalry and arrived via the race-track itself so that many thousands of people could see her. At the entrance to the stands, the band played 'Namo Namo Matha', the Ceylon national anthem, and 'God Save the Queen'. The crowds cheered and exhibited more enthusiasm than any others I had seen during her visit. Maybe the sporting blood of the people was touched by the Queen's real interest in the racing.

The following day, April 13, the first day of the Tamil and Sinhalese New Year, Ibrahim Ali Didi, the Prime Minister of the Maldivian Sultanate, led a delegation of his countrymen to an audience with the Queen. Some months previously, the Maldivians had become disgusted with their eight-month Republic and revived the Sultanate. It was decided to make this change while my wife and I were visiting the Islands, and one of the great worries of the Government at that time was whether or not there was sufficient time to change their form of administration before the Queen came to Ceylon. The Maldives are an independent nation of 80,000 Moslems, but they do rely on the United Kingdom to handle their foreign affairs and defence.

And then to Kandy, where, for the first time since Sri Wikrama Rajasinha, the last King of Kandy, lost his throne a hundred and forty years ago, the Kandyan chiefs met in the Audience Hall to acclaim an acknowledged sovereign of Ceylon. And what a brave show they made, with their heads surmounted by gold three-cornered hats and their jackets a blaze of scarlet and gold, blue and gold, and green and gold. On their foreheads hung the gold mark of the Dissawa and their waists were banded by heavy gold belts supporting jewelled daggers.

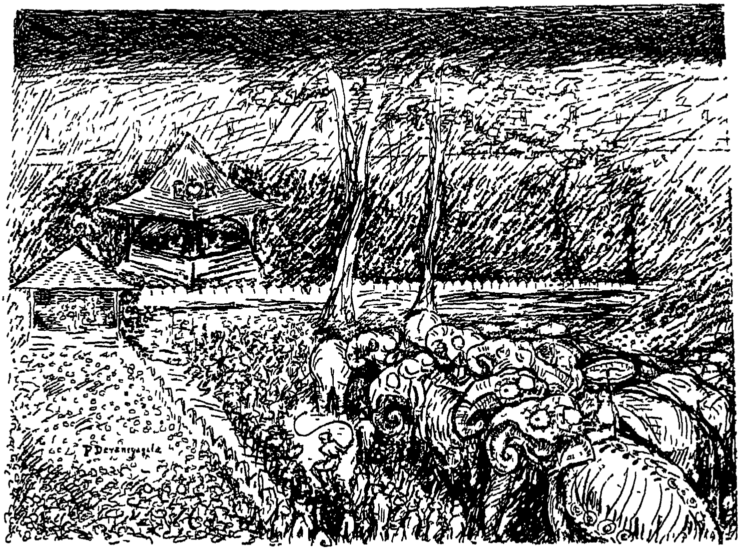
In the days of the Kings of Kandy, the Dissawas were

hereditary chiefs and their authority corresponded to that of a governor of a province. With the coming of the British, the title became a Crown appointment and, since Independence, a political plum. Only the most distinguished men of the Kandyan provinces can be appointed, however, and the position carries little besides prestige. Above the Dissawas are the Adigars. There are two Adigars who, in the days of the Kandyan Kings, were Prime Ministers and now are elected from the ranks of the Dissawas. We talked with the First Adigar and found him a charming old gentleman full of Kandyan lore.

The Queen wore a simple yellow dress with a full skirt, yellow flowers and no decorations. The Duke was attired as an Admiral of the Fleet. The First Adigar introduced the chiefs and then read a brief address to which the Queen replied. The entire ceremony, lasting only fifteen minutes, was most impressive. It was, in fact, the first ceremony of the tour whose roots went back into ancient Kandyan history.

The principal event of the royal visit was, however, the Perahera, a spectacle unique in Asia. The particular Perahera about to be described was one specially arranged for the Queen and was known as a *Raja Perahera* to distinguish it from the annual Kandyan Perahera which is held following the new moon in July and is known as the *Esala Perahera.*

The background was dramatic ; the lake, around whose placid mirror lies the old city of Kandy, reflected a blaze of colour. Particularly effective was the lighting of the tall trees across the water from the Temple of the Tooth. Instead of falling for the temptation of the Christmas tree with its multi-colours, the engineers gave each unit its own individual colour. In the centre of the lake was a fountain with rainbow colours playing on its waters. The city itself was afire, with virtually every building of size outlined in lights.



The Raja Perahera

We had a fine view of the parade. A table had been reserved, six months in advance, on the porch of the Queen's Hotel so that the whole family could enjoy their dinner and drinks while the procession passed in the street, six feet below us.

It rained early in the evening, but by ten o'clock, when the procession reached us, the skies were clear and a full moon was riding high over Kandy. Long before we saw it, however, we heard the murmur of the crowds; some quarter million people were jammed along the route. The murmur swelled to a booming acclaim as the first contingent of the Perahera came in view.

One advance-guard was made up of twenty whip-crackers whose long mule-skinner lashes snapped like pistols. In the times of the Ceylonese Kings, the Adigars were entitled to have whip-crackers to herald their approach and the Kandyan chiefs are still entitled to this noisy mark of rank on ceremonial occasions. I could not

help thinking that these boys, mounted, would prove most useful in the hunting field!

Hard on the whip-crackers pranced and gesticulated a battalion of Kandyan dancers whose heavy silver ornaments clanged and sparkled as they whirled in their wild pirouettes. Behind them came the drummers and blowers upon flutes and behind these again a swaggering line of Kandyan chiefs. These were the same chiefs who bowed humbly to the Queen at the morning ceremony in the Audience Hall, but one could barely recognize them. Memories of the old days of the Kandyan aristocracy were crowding in on them and they marched with heads high while their people instinctively paid them deference.

The elephants are the central figure of the Perahera, and the first of the hundred and twenty that took part in the procession was a great bull ridden by the *gajanayake nilame*, formerly the head of the King's elephant stables and the only man, except for royalty, entitled to ride an elephant in Kandy. He carried a silver goad or *ankusa*. The bull himself was draped in gold-embroidered scarlet trappings studded with electric lights.

The Perahera, despite its circus-like overtones, is primarily a religious ceremony and the high-light of the procession was the Maligawa Tusker, a huge bull whose ivory was protected by silver guards and on whose broad back was carried the golden casket containing the Sacred Relics. In the old days this casket contained the Tooth Relic of the Buddha, but now only minor relics are carried in the procession. The elephant walked on white cloths which were constantly spread before him and under a huge canopy which was held over his head by temple peons.

Following the Maligawa Tusker came two lines of dancers facing each other on either side of the street with drummers in the centre. At the end of the procession came the *diyawadana nilame*, the temporal or lay chief of

the Temple of the Tooth. The present holder of this august office, Dissawa Cuda Banda Nugawela, was attended by lance-bearers, an umbrella-bearer and a host of minor temple headmen.

We saw the Queen four more times during her visit — at the Governor-General's garden party in Kandy, at the investiture at Queen's House in Colombo, at the military parade on the morning of her departure on April 21, and, lastly, at her leave-taking on the quayside of Colombo harbour on April 21. All of these ceremonies had their moments of drama, but the one that struck me the most forcibly was the spontaneous singing of 'Happy Birthday to You' when the Queen appeared at the garden party. It was her birthday and she really looked as if she appreciated the gesture.

In retrospect, the tour was universally acclaimed a success. Despite memories of colonialism and the present-day bogy of Western imperialism, the great mass of the Ceylonese people responded wholeheartedly to the magic of the Queen and gave her a demonstration of loyalty that must have given pause to think, to those who doubt that the British Commonwealth of Nations is a going concern.

Chapter II

JAFFNA AND THE ISLANDS

King's House, in the old Dutch Fort at Jaffna, is full of ghosts and history. The governors of the East India Company held their courts in the vast, high-ceilinged rooms and often, forgetful of the homeland half a world away, ruled the land as their fancies willed.

In the cavernous kitchen whole oxen used to be roasted while, on the 250-foot-long veranda, the officers of the garrison drank their Hollands gin, sucked their long pipes and gazed, with smug satisfaction, at the mighty bastions of the surrounding fort. That was in 1680, but so well were the building and works constructed that today, two hundred and seventy-six years later, the mansion and the fort are in an almost perfect state of preservation. Thanks to the kindness of Gunesena de Soyza, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs, King's House was opened and made available to me, my family and a friend, during a long summer week-end.

The ghosts of King's House are seldom disturbed nowadays. The red-robed judges of Her Majesty's Circuit Court stay there when they come to Jaffna and His Excellency the Governor-General resides therein when he makes his yearly pilgrimage to the capital of the North, but usually the shutters are closed and the life-sized oil portrait of Victoria, as a young Queen, gazes serenely down on a dim and silent room. Only one old man is permanently stationed there as a caretaker, so I sent several of my servants from Colombo to help him. Awed by the vastness

of the house and frankly somewhat fearful of the spirits said to inhabit such an august pile, they told me they spent an eerie night and were more than delighted to see us when we arrived by air from Colombo on the following morning.

There is only one authentic ghost — that of a young Dutch lady — said to be now in residence, and J. Lawrence, the old Tamil caretaker, told me he had not seen her for twenty years. Curiously, the only time he did see her was during the day. Behind the main building, which is simply a line of huge barn-like rooms fronting on the veranda, there is a complex of wings, patios, wells and outbuildings. It was in one of these passages that he saw the lady. It was twilight and she was hurrying along with her back to him. He noted the long white dress, unlike any sari, and the veil over her head.

There are many tales as to who she was, but the most accepted theory is that she was a high-born Dutch girl who had been seduced by one of the old governors and, to hide her shame, had thrown herself down a well. This well has long since been filled in, but the passage where the watcher saw the ghost is the only way by which one can walk directly from the well to the lady's bedroom. This bedroom was the one I chose for Irene and myself, in the hope that the lady might be tempted to visit us. Usually no one sleeps there. A small door opens on to a patio from which leads the passage to the well. I left this door open, not that ghosts are bothered by little things like wood, but just to make things easier.

I wish I could honestly say I heard or saw or dreamed that the sad young lady of Holland came back. The wind sighed through the arches of the vast porch; polecats chased each other along the caverns of the roof; the old beams creaked and an owl cried in the margosa tree by the church, but she did not come.

Well might there be other unlaid spirits, however, for the fort of Jaffna has seen some grim days. In 1658 Ryclof

Van Goens, the elder, having captured Colombo, advanced toward Jaffna intent on driving 'the cursed Portuguese from the land'. His landing was materially aided by the Mudaliyar Tenmarachichi who had a long-standing debt to repay the masters of the city. It seems that he had once requested the Portuguese Governor for a wife from Lisbon and had been promised one. In due course a ship arrived and, having been told that his bride was aboard, the Mudaliyar made appropriate preparations and invited all his relatives to a great feast. The palanquin of the bride-to-be arrived and the Mudaliyar drew back the curtains — to reveal a snow-white bitch with a gold collar around her neck. One can easily imagine, therefore, the pleasure with which he led Van Goens' army to a position before the fort of Jaffna and then fervently blessed the Dutch efforts.

The siege, however, was long and bloody. The Dutch tore up the Portuguese graves and used pieces of the tombstones to load their mortars and bombards. More than five thousand Portuguese were crowded into the fort, which, unlike that of Galle, does not encompass a town but only the Governor's mansion, a church, barracks and other military buildings. When the captain was forced to surrender, after holding out against hunger, disease and cannonading for three months, only 2,170 miserable wretches staggered from the sally-port. These survivors were stripped naked and robbed of their personal belongings before being given the choice of prison in Batavia or enlistment in the Dutch service.

The present fort was rebuilt from the wreckage of the old one and completed in 1680. Its perfect state of preservation is due chiefly to the fact it has never had to withstand a siege. When Jaffna fell to the British in 1796, the garrison marched out without a shot being fired.

The church, which is located near King's House, follows the heavy Dutch architecture. The old wooden pews, where the Governor, his officers and the leading

merchants used to worship, are still preserved. As was the custom in those days, the choicest final resting-place was under the floor of the church itself and there are numerous finely carved tombstones let into the stone flags of the floor. The date over the door of the church is 1706, but it must have replaced an older building, for there are tombstones of 1666 and 1672. My children wished for a Sunday service there, so I read the lesson to them from the pulpit where undoubtedly Philip Baldeus, Minister of the Word of God in Ceylon, used to thunder at his flock in the late seventeenth century.

The fort is not the only place of interest in old Jaffna. On a previous visit to the city I dined with Mr. Hudson, the Government Agent, at the Residency, a fine old colonial mansion that was bequeathed to the nation by one of Mr. Hudson's predecessors, the famous Percival Acland Dyke, Esquire, who was familiarly known as the Raja of the North because of his liking for the ladies as well as for his sumptuous style of living. It was a fine though dark evening, and I decided to walk to the bank manager's home where I was spending the night. The shortest way was through the spacious park of the Residency, and as the bank manager and several of his friends, who said they were thoroughly familiar with the path, agreed to accompany me, we started out. Just as we were leaving, however, Mrs. Hudson warned us that there were a series of open wells in the park and to be very careful to avoid them.

We had progressed about half-way across the park and our eyes were rapidly becoming accustomed to the night when I stubbed my toe against a low projection and fell headlong down what later proved to be a twenty-five-foot well. Luckily, there was about four feet of water in the bottom which effectually broke my fall. I fell head first and I landed on my right shoulder which was bruised despite the water. Somewhat stunned and shaken but

otherwise in good shape, I yelled up to my three companions to get a rope. Two of them departed to do this and the third endeavoured in a quavering voice to cheer me up. I recognized his voice as that of the bank manager who had said he could steer me safely through the park. About this time I heard a soft slithering noise on the wall behind me, and, thinking it must be a rat, splashed water at it.

Help in the shape of my wife, my stepmother, Sir Cecil Syers, the British High Commissioner, my host and Wing-Commander Williams of the R.A.F. soon arrived, but it was a good forty minutes before a rope could be found and Williams, despite my objections, had himself lowered down the well and tied me into a sling so that I could be hauled out. In the interval, I kept hearing the slithering noises frequently and began to suspect that they were caused by something else besides rats. Cecil kept up such a really amusing line of chatter, however, that I did not have too much time to concentrate on my Stygian companions.

The following morning I walked, somewhat shakily, over to the well and looked down. Sunning itself on a ledge was a big cobra.

The histories of old towns like Jaffna interest me a great deal, so, being the lucky possessor of quite a useful small library on Ceylon, I did some reading on the area.

Jaffna lies on the extreme northern tip of the Island and, owing to its excellent harbour, has been a mart of trade for centuries. The Mudaliyar C. Rasanayagam, author of *Ancient Jaffna*, has done a great deal of research on the area and claims that Jaffna, or another town in the same district, was the Tarshish of Solomon. Sir Emerson Tennent believed that Galle was the site of this fabulous emporium of the ancient world, but it is my humble opinion that Rasanayagam backs up his arguments with considerably more factual data.

It is broadly agreed, however, that the Jaffna enclave was first settled by Panar tribes from southern India. One of the distinctive marks of these tribes was their ability to play the *yal*, a primitive musical instrument. In the fourth century B.C. the Sinhalese overran the area and left some dagobas as their imprint. About 200 B.C. the Tamils from India conquered the Jaffna peninsula and remained the paramount power until the Portuguese overthrew their last prince in 1623.

Jaffna and the neighbouring town of Mannar were the cities of the missionary efforts of St. Francis Xavier, and it was because some 600 of his converts were massacred by the Tamils that Dom Constantine, Viceroy of Goa, sent an expedition to punish them. The Bishop of Cochin accompanied the fleet and celebrated mass before the attack. The army of the Tamil king was defeated and among the spoils was said to be the Sacred Tooth relic, venerated by Buddhists as the Molar of the Master. The relic was reportedly sent to Goa, and, even though the King of Pegu offered 400,000 silver cruzados for its ransom, the archbishop, Dom Caspar, refused and ordered the Tooth to be first ground to powder and then burned in the presence of the court. Buddhists believe, however, that the Portuguese captured only an imitation, and that the real Tooth, which was hidden, is today venerated in Kandy.

There are few ruins extant that can be assigned to the Portuguese era, but some Portuguese influence remains. The fisherwomen still wear the short jacket introduced by the conquerors, and many of the older inhabitants still tie their turbans in the shape of a cross. Catholicism, moreover, is the dominant Christian religion of the area. When we went swimming in the tepid but refreshing waters of the Bay of Bengal, some twelve miles from Jaffna, we passed a rustic shrine built of coral in the shape of a cave of the Nativity.

The most characteristic sight in Jaffna is the tall spires of the palmyra palms. These magnificent trees have over a hundred uses and play a vital part in the local economy. The artistically plaited *cadjun* fences with which the Jaffna Tamil surrounds his property are made from the leaves of the palmyra. He drinks the toddy, eats the fruit and makes his mats and baskets from the fronds. So tough is the fibre of these palms that beams of it are now doing excellent duty in houses well over a hundred years old — and this in a climate that attacks and crumbles sandstone.

Another tree with great local prestige is the margosa, which is considered a virtual living drug-store. Since ancient times, oil of margosa seed has been known to possess powerful disinfectant properties. It is employed both internally and externally by the Tamils. The bark is boiled and used in a bath for cleansing mothers after childbirth. The shells of the fruits, when burnt, produce an acrid smoke that drives away mosquitoes. The flower can be fried and eaten and the leaf, when ploughed under, breaks down into a good manure. Lastly, the aromatic twigs of the margosa make excellent toothbrushes.

In the quiet of twilight, we assembled on the cool porch and served drinks to our guests, Mr. Sri Khanta, the new Government Agent of the Northern Province, and his wife. A devout Hindu, Mr. Sri Khanta has a fine record in the Ceylon Civil Service and well deserves his present important post. The Government Agent corresponds to the Governor of an American state but has more power. The Northern Province consists of more than 600,000 people with Jaffna (about 50,000) as the provincial capital and the administrative headquarters.

Another prominent member of the Jaffna community is the Rev. Dr. Bunker, American headmaster of Jaffna College, the oldest Protestant mission college in the Far East. It was on his invitation that I originally visited Jaffna last year and made a speech at the college

Commencement. Both of these men were able to give us much interesting information on all phases of Jaffna life.

The great majority of the inhabitants of the province are Tamils, known, because of their industrious natures and general canniness, as the Scotsmen of Ceylon.

Jaffna people are divided into various castes with the *Vellela*, or farmer caste, evidently at the top of the tree. The Vellela are reputed to be the descendants of the ancient kings of Jaffna. Servants are of the *Kovia* caste and so on. Fishermen have sub-castes of their own, being divided into *Karias*, *Thimilars* and *Mukkuwars*. Brahmins are almost all priests. There is a small group of Moors in Jaffna who live by the laws of the Prophet. Not being allowed to eat pig, these Moors are especially fond of dugong, a manatee type of warm-blooded animal that is sometimes netted in the shallow seas of Mannar. With small puckered faces and forms similar to women, the dugongs were the mermaids of the ancient mariners. They suckle their young and are said to give piteous cries when killed.

In the Palk Straits between India and Ceylon lie a small group of islands whose history and present status has intrigued me ever since I read that Marco Polo landed on one of them and described the inhabitants as 'idolaters, who ate flesh and drank tree wine'. Of particular interest to me, however, was the legend of the wild Irishman, Lieutenant Nolan of the 4th Ceylon Regiment, who ruled the outlying island of Delft in the early years of the nineteenth century and left a set of tales picturesque enough for Casanova to envy. It seems that on July 11, 1811, Nolan, an officer in the Engineers, was commanded by the Rt. Hon. John Wilson, 'Lieutenant Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the British settlements in the island of Ceylon in the Indian Seas', to proceed to

Delft and experiment with the growing of flax with a view to supplying the Government with canvas. The following year he was also given charge of the horse-breeding establishment on the island. These horses, introduced by the Portuguese, made Delft the only indigenous source of horses for Ceylon. Not only did Nolan achieve considerable success in the horse-breeding line by importing new blood, but he left his own stamp on the community as well. Even today there are grey-eyed inhabitants of Delft.

Accordingly, I requested the head of the Customs to let us visit the islands, and through the kindness of T. F. K. Abayasekera, Assistant Collector of Customs, Jaffna, a launch was made available to us. We drove to the customs jetty in the dawn. Fishermen were starting to wade out to the shallows to cast their hand nets; cattle were being driven down the narrow roads to pasture and the quiet of morning lay on the flat pastel-hued land. At the dock Abayasekera, his assistant E. A. Devasagayam, and the Customs' enforcement officer, S. J. Outschoorn, received us and led us aboard the sixty-foot, radar-equipped launch *Sugamaruthan*. Used to catch smugglers, she is the fastest vessel in the Palk Straits and at full throttle can do better than twenty-five knots.

The island of Nainativu is famous for its twin temples, and Abayasekera ordered the captain to put in to the jetty so that we could land and see the sacred buildings. The oldest temple is that of Ammon, the wife of Siva, which yearly attracts some 50,000 persons during the ten-day festival in July. About three hundred years old and known in India as well as in Ceylon as a place of pilgrimage, the temple consists of a court around an inner sanctum in which, behind bronze-studded doors, reposes the deity. Along the wall of the court are lesser gods whose abodes can be seen by the unbelievers, and the priest kindly revealed for me the chapel of Vyravar, the Watcher of the

Gods, who rides upon a dog. The god was beautifully carved with his faithful hound beside him. I gave a small donation to the temple, and the priest dabbed my forehead with ashes, the sign of the pilgrim.

Leaving the Hindu temple, we walked along a palm-shaded, sandy road to the Buddhist shrine of Nagadipa. A relatively new temple, having been opened only some score of years, the complex consists of a silver-gilt dagoba, a clean and well-built religious centre house and an almost finished temple where a marble statue of the Master was soon to be installed. The bhikku (priest), Somasiri Tissa Thero, is a learned and kindly man who took great pride in his shrine. He had been in Burma and we had a long talk of the holy places of Nepal which Irene and I had seen some months previously. In addition to a small statue of the Buddha, there was a statue of the Hindu god Vishnu, sitting on a peacock. The bhikku told me that most pilgrims, regardless of whether they were Hindu or Buddhist, visited both shrines. On our departure he gave me a temple flag, a signal honour as these holy flags are virtually never given away, much less to Christians.

Back on the launch again, we headed for the open sea and soon the heavy roll indicated only too clearly that we were getting the full force of the monsoon winds. The children bore up admirably, however, and even Rohini de Mel, who admitted she was no sailor, weathered the swell by sheer will-power. Finally the low-lying contour of Delft rose above the horizon and we were soon threading a cautious way through the reef to a precarious landing on the dock. So risky is the little harbour that Delft is completely cut off from the mainland during hard blows. Last year the island was isolated for nearly two weeks and the people, who must import virtually all their staple foods, were near starvation.

Ranged on the jetty were the notables of Delft, P. L.

Patrick, the district Revenue Officer, who represents the Ceylon Government, and a fine-looking old headman named Nagendrar, chairman of the committee of the three villages of Delft, and the most respected man on the island. The Church, in the persons of the Reverend Father S. A. Swampillai of the Catholic order and Dr. Jeyam Mills of the American Methodists, was also represented. We all shook hands and repaired to the rest-house where we had cool drinks and I learned from the priests something of their problems before we set forth on a tour of the island in an ancient truck, one of the only two motor vehicles on Delft.

My daughters Phillippa and Rene are particularly interested in horses; in fact my promise to show them the wild horses was the bait I used in getting them to come along on the trip. Piling into the truck, we headed for the Horse Plains, a wild arid stretch of prairie on the south-western section of the seven by five-mile island. There was something very familiar in the stone walls that divided the fields and I was told that Nolan had ordered this unusual fencing to remind him of Ireland.

Men had been sent out early that morning to round up the fifty or so wild horses that still remain on Delft, but the band had eluded their efforts and we were able to find only a small herd of about ten. They were tough but not ungainly little animals of about twelve hands. The stallions appeared to be better types than the mares. Remembering that no new blood has been introduced since Nolan left in 1824, it is surprising that the stock is as good as it appears to be. The sad fact is, however, that these ponies now bring so little in the markets of the mainland that it no longer pays to lasso and train them.

The Portuguese first imported Arab horses to Delft and at the same time trained the inhabitants to use the lasso. The Reverend Philip Baldeus says in his book, *A Description of the Empire of Ceylon* (London, 1703),

that 'horses were brought unto this isle, which, multiplying in time, produced a certain kind of horse that are very small but hardy and fit to travel on stony and rocky ground. They live in the wilderness and are taken by catching them in snares or ropes.'

The modern cowboys of Delft have not forgotten this art and a youngster showed me how easy it was for him to catch an agile goat with his running noose. Nolan built three sets of elaborate stone stables and an ingenious series of wells for watering his stock. Curiously enough, these original wells of Nolan's are today the island's main source of pure water, and the need for piping this water to other sections of Delft is a burning issue. At noon we drove to the Residency, the mansion that Nolan built for himself and within whose three-foot walls he held court.

Nolan's interest in the female portion of the population was not universally appreciated and in 1819 a petition was drawn up by forty-five persons and sent to the British Resident at Jaffna. The substance of the charges, which Michael Banks, a British anthropologist, kindly translated from the yellowing documents in the Kachcheri at Jaffna, was that Nolan had taken advantage of his judicial position — in addition to running the stud he was chief officer and magistrate of the island — to provide himself with ladies. It was further alleged that he had ordered one recalcitrant maiden to be given twelve strokes for refusing his attentions and that another female had thrown herself down a well after producing one of his children. However, none of these charges could be made good in court and there is no question but that the great mass of the population liked the impetuous Irishman. Suffice it to say that the charges were thrown out and Nolan continued to rule in Delft until he retired from the service and went back to Ireland in 1824.

After lunch, I napped for an hour and then attended a meeting at the village council-house where tea and cakes

were served and Mr. Nagendrar made an excellent and moving speech, the essence of which is so well expressed in his accompanying letter that I will quote it verbatim.

Village Committee
Delft (Ceylon)
24-7-54

To

His Excellency Mr. Philip K. Crowe,
American Ambassador in Ceylon

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

Our island is today bedecked, ornate, and gay, and the population agog and eager to welcome Your Excellency to our shores.

Our island, isolated, with soil unfit for agriculture, suffers from many natural setbacks, the worst of it all, being scarcity of good drinking water. During the dry season the position is so acute that the Government distributes free water. The inhabitants have no alternation, but to drink brackish saline water during the major part of the year. Good water is available only at Sarapiddy in Delft West, which is about five miles away from the centre of the island.

Our Village Committee, being the unit of local government in the island, has made representations to the Government to have our island supplied with pipe-borne water, and though the Government has agreed in principle with our request and certain preliminary steps as survey, etc., have been taken by the Water Works Engineer, the scheme is either delayed or abandoned because of the high cost of pipe and construction, etc.

We beg of your Excellency (if our request is in order in keeping with procedure observed in international relationship of nations) to help our island of Delft to achieve our ambition of obtaining pipe-borne water, through your good offices (as people have to drink brackish, saline water during the greater part of the year) by doing all that is possible to achieve this end. We really do not know what specific request to make in this respect as this is a case where two nations are concerned and where certain routine procedure may have to be adopted, in making a request.

Our island will always remain grateful for the great boon that such a scheme will prove to be, when completed through your efforts, in your official or personal capacity.

Thanking you

We remain,

/s/ S. NAGENDRAR
Chairman V.C. Delft
(For the inhabitants of Delft)

The old gentleman also mentioned in his speech that another crying need of the island is communication with the mainland. There is only one small launch — the *Silver Spray*, familiarly known as the *Let Us Pray* — connecting Delft with civilization. Many of the able-bodied men on Delft work on the mainland or on the other islands, and this craft is quite unable to handle the commuters.

The sad fact is that life on Delft is hard and discouraging. The only good soil on the island is found in the waterless area. In the vicinity of Nolan's wells there is only naked rock. In Nolan's day the population was never more than 3,000 and was apparently fairly contented. Cattle were then, as now, the big industry, but in those days Delft cattle were prized on the mainland and brought a good price. Even in Portuguese times, the island was famous for its cattle and was known as Ilha das Vacas. Today the 10,000 thin inbred beasts that wander the stony pastures, dry and shimmering with heat, are hardly worth shipping anywhere, and milk, which used to be a good source of income, has ceased to provide a living. Manure is now the most important by-product of the cattle and great piles of it are gathered for shipment to the mainland. Apparently a man must leave the island to earn a decent living, so a number of them work in the harbour at Colombo.

Two-thirds of the 6,000 population are Hindus and one-third Christians. All of the latter, except for a few hundred Methodists, are Catholics. For some strange

reason, there are fifteen schools on the island. Politically, Delft votes for the United National Party, the present ruling party in Ceylon, and there is no Communist opposition. Life is evidently hard enough on Delft without digging for trouble in the shape of politics. Mr. A. L. Thambiayah, the Member of Parliament for the islands, is popular and credited with doing what he can to relieve the hardship.

One of the few amenities of life on Delft is the consumption of toddy. From April through September, when the sap runs in the tall palmyra palms, toddy is collected by the toddy-tappers, a special caste of Tamils. The concoction looks like coconut milk and usually has about 5 per cent alcoholic content. If left longer in a jug, however, it becomes stronger. According to those who should know, a large part of the population drown their sorrows in toddy.

Cruising home across a pearl-coloured sea in the late afternoon, we learned something of the problems that Her Majesty's customs officers face in Ceylon. Situated only about forty miles from India, and sixty from the French enclave of Karikal, Jaffna's location was an open invitation to smugglers. Karikal, in fact, existed only as a smugglers' haven and the sole threat to the illicit trade lay in the efforts of the Ceylon Customs. This service, like its Chinese counterpart, was British-trained and has always had a fine tradition of service and honesty. With opium selling at between six and seven hundred rupees a pound in Colombo and costing only about one hundred and fifty a pound in Karikal, the enormous profits and chances for bribery were obvious.

This opium was in great demand among the Moors of south-eastern Ceylon, and because they were willing to pay heavily for their vice, the trade, despite the continuous opposition of the Customs, continued to thrive. Many were the ruses the smugglers used, but, because they were

also vain men, they often told the police how they managed to elude the law.

Landing of contraband on Ceylon was only half the battle; it had still to be forwarded to Colombo and, since there is only one motor road connecting the two cities, the Customs set up a road block where all suspicious cars were carefully examined. The inspectors were canny men and it was not often that the smugglers put it over them. Sometimes, however, they did. Take the case of the Jaffna man who bought a car on the instalment plan in Colombo. He paid five thousand rupees down and promised to pay the balance in a month's time. The due date arrived but no cheque was forthcoming from Jaffna. The company wrote numerous letters and finally, in desperation, sent an agent to Jaffna to make the buyer pay up or forfeit the car. The agent found the man's wife at home. She said that her husband had not been able to raise the balance due, but was out trying to do so. The agent said he had heard that one before and, taking the car, drove it forthwith to Colombo. The next day, the Jaffna man appeared in Colombo with the balance of the money due and, of course, was allowed to take the car. Hidden under the back seat was a king's ransom in opium!

Another famous case concerns a bishop's car. A bishop's chauffeur was approached and offered a large bribe to tell His Lordship that his car was unserviceable on the day of a planned journey to Colombo. Another car was offered and the bishop duly proceeded to Colombo. No one would think of stopping the bishop's car at the Customs barrier. The smugglers made a really huge haul with this ruse.

The little fellows who did the actual smuggling got very small pay. Twenty-five rupees each, for the four members of the crew of a catamaran that made the long and dangerous trip to Karikal by night, was the average reward. However, if these men were caught, the big boss

saw that their fines were paid and that they got a new catamaran if their own was confiscated. The smuggled goods were packed in sandbags so that they could be jettisoned rapidly, if it became necessary to dispose of them.

The smuggling of human beings from India to Ceylon had more sinister overtones. The standard of living in Ceylon is many times higher than that in southern India, with the inevitable result that thousands of Tamils from the Malabar and Coromandel coasts try to enter Ceylon by stealth. This illegal migration was intensified when there was starvation in southern India. Unscrupulous persons, in both countries, fattened on this tragic trade. For sixty rupees, the poor Indian was guaranteed that he would be set ashore somewhere on the coast of Ceylon. A shipment of people, including women and children, was dumped during the night on one of the sea islands off Mannar and told that they were on the mainland. There was no water on the island and three days later the corpses were found by the Ceylon patrols.

In most cases, however, arrangements were made in advance and the illegal immigrant was received by friends or relatives and hurried inland where he soon found a job. Because of his lack of papers, he was often willing to work for less wages than *bona fide* Ceylonese citizens and also was less likely to strike or do anything else that might call attention to him. It was alleged that much of the common labour of the northern area was performed by these immigrants and that some landlords would not employ anyone else.

The sum-total of it all is that, between opium smugglers on one hand and human smugglers on the other, the hard-worked Customs officers had and still have a constant battle to keep this best of all possible worlds from falling completely to pieces. Since this sketch was written, Karikal and other French possessions on the subcontinent have

been returned to India and the smuggling trade with Ceylon has declined appreciably.

Ten miles out from the jungle-bordered coast of the Gulf of Mannar lie the twin islands of Iranaitivu. Known only to a few wildfowlers and the kindly Catholic Fathers who minister to their spiritual wants, the primitive inhabitants of the islands are nearly forgotten by the outside world and carry on the narrow cycle of their days just as they did hundreds of years ago.

Visiting Iranaitivu takes considerable arranging and we were indebted to Velu Kumaraswamy, M.P. for the district, for getting us the necessary means of transportation. Leaving King's House in the old Dutch Fort at Jaffna at an early hour, we drove to Karativu, where we left our cars and canoed across the shallow green expanse of the Jaffna Lagoon. On the far side we were met by a small fleet of jeeps and Land Rovers in which we drove down the road towards Mannar, along the old highway over which armies of the Portuguese, Dutch and British marched to their destinies. At Pooneryn, we inspected the squat Dutch fort and then took off on the long stretch of highway which runs through the heart of the Wanni, or wild country of the Northern Province. Dense jungle hedged us in on either side ; the dung of elephant was everywhere apparent ; and wanderoo monkeys chattered in the overhanging trees. Leaving the highway after passing the dying river of Mandekai Aru, we turned right and chugged along a narrow jungle trail for another ten miles and then reached the coast.

At Veravil, a minute fishing village on the coast, we were greeted by an impressive ceremony. The whole population of perhaps a hundred souls were assembled under the leadership of Father Villavarasingham, the dedicated Tamil Catholic priest of the district. A *pandal*, or ceremonial arch, had been built and, as we passed under

it, we were cheered by the populace and showered with rose-water from a silver sprinkler. Our coming was indeed an event, as the fishermen of Veravil, like those of Iranaitivu, are 'untouchables', despised and avoided members of the lowest social order in Tamil Ceylon.

The distant islands were a line of low palm trees which seemed to rise straight from the grey-green expanse of the gulf. Luckily, a launch had been sent down from Jaffna for us ; otherwise, we would have had to proceed by sailing canoes, a method of transport that the Father told me could take from one to eight or nine hours, depending on the wind.

The Gulf of Mannar is a notoriously shallow body of water and I was not surprised when our launch was forced to heave-to while we were still half a mile from the shore of the islands. Stepping off into the sea, we trudged slowly through gin-clear water, spotted here and there by green seaweed, to the beach. The party was a large one and I felt somewhat like Moses leading the children of Israel across the Red Sea. As we walked up from the beach to where the islanders were drawn up to meet us, there was a sudden volley of noise and for a moment I had the awful thought that the inhabitants had decided to get even with the world for all the degradation they have been forced to endure through the ages and were beginning their revolution by wiping us out. The reports turned out to be merely the ceremonial firecrackers exploded all over the East to drive away devils on festal occasions.

There was no doubt that the islanders were glad to see us, for, in addition to Kumaraswamy, who was their elected Member in Parliament, our party was made up of the Assistant Government Agent of the Province, the district Revenue Officer and a number of their retainers. My own group consisted of my wife, Jim Espy, Counsellor of the American Embassy, Mae Esterline, wife of my Public Affairs Officer, and Dr. and Mrs. Bryant Moore.

I had been told that the fishermen of Iranaitivu were poor people, and certainly their ramshackle huts, with doors so low one had to enter on all fours and no windows, indicated a primitive level of living; and although the people were not starving, there were many evidences of malnutrition. Despite their poverty, however, many of the women were handsome and all were full of smiles.

The church is the centre of the islanders' world and it was to the church that we were first conducted. A spacious structure on which the Fathers and people have lavished their efforts, the chapel is a touching monument to their faith. There are no pews but the floor is smooth and polished, and as we entered, a group of women were kneeling with their arms stretched out on either side in the shape of the cross, while their babies played on the floor or sought their suppers at the breast.

The Catholic Church has played a major part in the lives of the inhabitants since the days of the Portuguese, nearly four hundred years ago. With the Dutch conquest, many Ceylonese converts were forced to renounce the Roman faith, but no one bothered with the remote islanders of Iranaitivu, where a long succession of selfless Fathers of the Oblate Order maintained their faith.

Father Villavarasingham, an earnest, intelligent man of fifty, who spends much of his time on the islands, told me that despite this low standard of living the people of Iranaitivu lead very moral lives. When they do yield to temptation, the punishment is unique. In the case of adultery, both offenders are required to wear crowns of thorns and carry heavy wooden crosses during three successive Sunday church services. There is virtually no stealing among the three hundred families of the islands, and cases of serious crime are so rare that the Father does not remember when the last one occurred.

After a sumptuous lunch, provided by His Lordship the Bishop of Jaffna, and transported for us from the

mainland, we dozed under the palm trees and sipped coconut juice. Water on Iranaitivu North, where the village is situated, is brackish and, to my taste, virtually undrinkable. There is a good well on the southern isle, but it is three miles away and piping it would be too expensive for the villagers to afford.

By four o'clock the heat of the day was past, and Jim, Bryant and I set out with shotguns to try our luck with the grey partridges which thrive on the barren wastes of the islands. We had no beaters, but the village boys tried their best and drove several brace of birds before our guns. In December, when the garganey and pintail duck migrate south from beyond India, the island is said to be a hunter's paradise, but transportation to it is so hazardous at that time that few Europeans or mainland Ceylonese bother to shoot there.

Like villagers the world over, the inhabitants of the islands love speeches, the longer the better, and when I saw that a cadjun roof had been built over a frame and that chairs were ranged at one end of this primitive town hall, I feared the worst. My fears were soon realized, for we were rounded up and seated. Mr. Kumaraswamy then launched into a political speech in which he enumerated what he had done and would do for the island. The good Father replied to the effect that while the M.P. had in fact secured the island a radio and a post office, some of his other promises had not yet been translated into fact. The islands have no medical facilities and a dispensary has been promised to them for several years. He said that another crying need is a safe means of transportation to the mainland. A motor-driven launch would make all the difference. All of the able men are fishermen and a small lighthouse would greatly facilitate these operations. In the monsoon periods, the rickety canoes are blown far out to sea and sometimes lost for good.

The Father also spoke eloquently on the vital question

of food. Although the islanders are low-caste and can therefore eat fish and meat, they seldom have more than two meals a day and, when storms prevent fishing or they are unable to find work on the mainland, there is real starvation. Against such periods the Father has a fund, built up during the periods of good times, but it seldom allows for more than a meagre extra ration. In times of famine, the Government has to come to the aid of the islanders with donations of rice.

My turn to speak came next and was preceded by the following plea, read by the Father in Tamil :

To : His Excellency the Honourable Mr. Philip K. Crowe,
United States Ambassador in Ceylon.

May it please your Excellency :

To accept the wholehearted greetings of the poor inhabitants of this Ultima Thule on God's earth. Coming from a land literally flowing with milk and honey, your Excellency can see all round you the abysmal ignorance and direst poverty under which we live and move. The history of this far-flung island tells us that human life at its lowest ebb is maintained here, only by the solace of our self-sacrificing missionaries. If it were not for their missionary zeal and effort, our land would have long ago sunk into wilderness and become a fit place for bomb tests.

It will please Your Excellency to learn that our island possesses immense possibilities in marine industry. Being economically ill-equipped to exploit our resources, we lead a life of endless debt. Lacking quick, safe and cheap means of transport, we are forced to sell the products of our industry at ridiculously low prices.

Our sanitary conditions are deplorable indeed. Infantile mortality and premature death among adults are the rule. We do not possess even the basic need of life — drinking water. Though we are blessed with season rainfall, yet we have no means of preserving the water. Since our shores have suffered repeated sea-erosions, all the rain that falls runs off to sea.

In addition to the lack of quick means of transport, this island suffers from the absence of even elementary medical

facilities. We lack safe and quick transport of the sick. Even adequate means of communication with the rest of the world is denied to us for want of a telegraph office and daily mail service. Giving a detailed account of our disabilities will make a veritable fairy tale of woes. Since aids to agriculture and industry are sadly lacking, we are on the downward path of retrogression.

However, the sincere efforts of our M.P., Mr. V. Kumaraswamy, and our G.A., Mr. M. Sri Khanta, encourage us like a silver lining amidst lowering dark clouds. The comparatively few government officials who were brave enough to cross this sea, have wholeheartedly put their shoulders to the wheel for our uplift.

As a representative and Ambassador of the enlightened and forward United States, we, the neglected specimen of humanity, have heard of the limitless aids your favoured country is showering on backward races. We have laid here our disabilities to you, and we crave you to extend your country's generosity to us, unfortunate humans, by giving us such aids as would be in keeping with the dignity of your nation to lift us from the depravity we are living.

We are, Your Excellency,

The Inhabitants of Iranaitivu.

After this eloquent plea, there was little I could do but make a personal donation to the Father's fund and promise the people that if my country did decide to aid Ceylon, I would certainly remember the plight of the islanders of Iranaitivu. I reminded them, however, that although they were poor, they were rich in their faith and in the good missionary who devoted his life to their service.

There is no written history of the people of Iranaitivu, but the old Portuguese chronicles mention the fact that certain low-caste peoples were sent to the islands to look after the horses and it was primarily as cattle and horse watchers that the people existed. With the coming of the British, interest in horses for draught and cavalry purposes increased and horses were sometimes shipped to Iranaitivu

from Delft for pasturage and the islands came to be known as the Horse Plains.

During the Dutch days the islands were called Horn and Enchuyfen, and as recently as 1840 were referred to as the 'Two Brothers'. The present names are Tamil and signify the Island of Nets. Fishing as a means of livelihood was taught the people by the Catholic Fathers and, since the decline in the demand for horses, has been the mainstay of the islands' economy. There are two seasons: the turtle season from October through January, and the fishing season from March through September. The flesh of both the turtles and the fish is dried locally.

The sea is always with the people of Iranaitivu and from its depths come divers *basasu* or evil spirits. There are also many legends. The belief in a flood which submerged a great country has its origin in the silting-up of the shallow seas with the result that storms drove the waters across the lands and swamped many ancient towns. The same legend is current among the high-caste Tamils of the area, who attribute the flood to the anger of the gods. It seems that one Terunnanse, a high priest of Siva, was boiled alive in oil by the Raja of Kalaniya, who suspected him of dallying with the Ranee. Subsequently, the priest was found innocent, but the Raja's domains and all his people were made to pay for the ruler's crime. On stormy nights, the ghosts of these people scream as they raise white hands out of the sands.

The Gulf of Mannar was supposed to be the area where Sindbad the sailor was shipwrecked and was also the body of water much publicized by the Arab historians. Ibn-el-Wardee, the fourteenth-century Moslem writer, related a tale of sea-cows (dugongs) that suckled their young and sighed like women when they were drawn from the waters. In 1560 seven dugongs were caught off Mannar and shipped to Goa, seat of the Portuguese power in India, where the Viceroy had them dissected by his physicians.

But legends of brave days do not help the poor people of Iranaitivu: their primary interest is not history but filling their bellies.

The warm seas surrounding her and the icy torrents of her mountains have both contributed to the wealth of Ceylon. The oysters of the Indian Ocean yield their lustrous pearls and the gem-pits of the foothills their sparkling precious and semi-precious stones. Both industries are of great antiquity. So famous were the pearls of Ceylon that the early kings styled themselves 'Lord of the Pearl Fishery'. Records of the third century before Christ mentioned the fishery at Mannar, and both Pliny and Marco Polo commented at length on the size and purity of Ceylon pearls and gems.

To see for myself what is left of these founts of fabulous riches, I journeyed to Mannar, the site of the ancient pearl beds, and to Ratnapura, the city of gems.

Mannar lies more than two hundred miles north of Colombo and is at the base of the chain of islands that links Ceylon to India. Known as Adam's Bridge, these islands are said to have been created by the bears and the monkeys to allow Prince Rama to cross to Ceylon when he came with his army to rescue Sita when that fair lady was held prisoner by the demon Ravana. The palm squirrels also helped by rolling in the dust and then shaking themselves over the crannies to fill them in. The lines on the squirrels' backs are the result of a gentle stroke of Rama's hand.

Despite its charming origin, Mannar today is a dusty little island whose main reason for existence is the fact that it is the port of entry for travellers who arrive by the ferry from India. We spent a comfortable night in the rest-house and in the clear light of the early morning explored the island. First to claim our attention was the old Dutch fort. Originally erected by the Portuguese in the early

years of the seventeenth century to protect the pearling beds which lie off the coast to the south, the fort has been the scene of much bloody and romantic history. It was in this fort that Dona Catherina, princess of Kandy, stayed while the Portuguese schemed to put her on the throne and thus gain control of the country for themselves. They succeeded, but the Kandyan people soon revolted and pretty little Dona Catherina was again in exile. Later she was captured by Wimaladharma, King of Kandy, who made her his chief queen and by whom she had a son and two daughters. Her husband then died and she was forced to marry his brother, Senerat, who promptly drowned his nephew, her son by his brother. The queen died of a broken heart.

In 1658 the Portuguese were besieged in this fort by the Dutch, and after undergoing frightful privations, finally surrendered. The Dutch rebuilt the fort in 1686 and since it was surrendered to the British in the nineteenth century without a shot being fired, the old walls have never had to withstand another siege. Wandering into the grass-grown square, I noticed a long low house on the opposite end of the parade. It turned out to be the home and office of Mr. T. A. Mylvaganam, Collector of Customs for the Mannar district and the highest Government official in the area. He kindly invited us in and opened the old Dutch chapel for our inspection. Cool and musty now, the little room must have been the scene of brave vows and bitter confessions.

Questioned on the possibility of the pearl fishery being revived, the Collector told me that the matter is under consideration, but that there are so many Government bureaus involved that he doubts if much will come of it. The last fishery took place just after the close of the first world war and was, according to the records, not too successful a venture. The oysters belong to the Crown and are brought up by Government divers and then

auctioned. The divers are mostly Malabars and Moormen from India; they are superstitious men and well they

Pearl divers at Mannar

might be, for the seas around Mannar hold shark, giant ray and octopus. To ward off these demons of the deep, the divers used to purchase charms from the *pillalkadtar*,

or shark-binders. These charms were only good for a day. Marco Polo, himself a shrewd trader, noted that the binders predicted awful deaths for those hardy pearl divers who scorned their charms.

The auctions, which took place at the fishing hamlet of Aripo, some twenty miles down the coast from Mannar, had all the elements of glamour and chance that most appeal to the Ceylonese. The poorest man could bid for half a dozen oysters and then have the thrill of opening them. He might find a pearl that would make him rich beyond his dreams. In 1814 there were 76,000,000 pearls sold at auction, but by 1860 the number had dropped to 10,000,000 and the last fishery brought up only a fraction of that amount.

Inland from Mannar is the Giant's Tank, reported to be the fourth largest artificial lake in the world. The fifteen-mile-long bund (retaining wall) encloses some 22,000 acres of water on whose shimmering expanse grow a myriad of water-lilies and over whose surface dart flights of bright-hued birds. The tank is a bird sanctuary and richly repays the ornithologist's time.

To this day, no one knows for sure who built the Giant's Tank and for years it was considered an engineering error. In 1739 the Dutch Governor, Van Imhoff, tried to restore it, but failed and came to the conclusion that the original architects had miscalculated their levels. In 1807 the British engineer, Lieutenant Schneider, surveyed the tank and came to the same conclusion that the ancients' planning was faulty. Sir Emerson Tennent, the historian, also accepted this view. In 1882, however, H. P. Lovering, the district surveyor, carried out 28 miles of levels and triumphantly announced that the designers of the tank were right but for some reason had not completed their work. By 1897 the Public Works Department had repaired the bund and restored the channel so that the waters of the Malwatu Oya could be diverted to fill the vast tank as it appears today.

Our subsequent trip to Ratnapura, the gem city, took us to a very different part of Ceylon in an entirely new setting. Instead of north to the arid plains of Mannar, broken here and there by palmyra palms, we drove south to the foothills of the central mountain massif, through a land green with ripening paddy and shaded by endless plantations of coconut in the lower levels and rubber at the higher altitudes.

The Ratnapura district, some fifty miles south of Colombo, is in the Kandyan country and it was to the house of the Ratemahatmaya Tikiri Bandera Weerasekera, a Kandyan gentleman of the old school, that we first proceeded. The Ratemahatmaya (a title roughly equivalent to Squire) received us most cordially and, after offering us a refreshing drink, drove us to the gem mines.

The jewel-bearing sands, in that location, lie at about the thirty-foot level and after a shaft is sunk to that depth lateral tunnels are run out from it. The pay-dirt is then piled up near a shallow pool where half a dozen virtually naked workers wash the sand in round wicker baskets. This allows the larger gravel to sink to the bottom of the baskets and subsequently be collected for inspection. Three pannings were made while we watched and several dull blue and yellow sapphires were found in the haul. Questioned as to their worth, the manager told us that the largest might fetch two rupees.

'Gemming', as it is locally called, is in fact still more of a gamble than the pearl fishery used to be. The pit may hit a paying stratum and it may not. Like oil-wildcatting, gemming takes capital, and since few men wish to shoulder this risk alone most of the pits are run on shares. The pit we visited was dug on land owned by the Buddhist temple of Adam's Peak, and the temple, through its business manager, had a stake in the operation. There were also twelve shareholders who contributed their work and

received a percentage of the profits, if any. To keep these shareholders alive in the meantime, five rupees per week are paid as an advance. In a good month a shareholder, who receives a little less than three rupees for every hundred rupees of net profit, can make as much as a thousand rupees. Or he and his family may have to live on less than a rupee a day.

The temptation to try and steal a good stone is strong and occasionally one of the shareholders, working in the washing pit, attempts to palm one and secrete it in his gee-string. His fellow-workers more or less expect such attempts and usually let him off with a good slap. Stealing is seldom successful as everyone with an interest watches everyone else, and the man employed by the owner of the pit scans the workers with an eagle eye from his perch above the washing pond.

The rough stones are usually bought up by the Mohammedan dealers at auctions and are then cut locally and sold to the retailers. Really big stones, such as the sixty-carat ruby found in the Ratnapura district some years ago, are sent to Amsterdam for cutting, the local cutters being unwilling to risk such a delicate operation on a valuable stone. The Moslems in Ceylon have long been associated with the gem trade and many believe in the old Arab superstitions about certain precious stones. Among other virtues, the Arabs hold that the ruby purifies the blood, quenches thirst and ensures honour. They also believe that a true gem becomes invisible in fire and is capable of shining in the dark.

Seven varieties of rubies, varying from striped to rose red, are found in the district. They are called *ratha* and good ones are the most sought-after stones in the trade. Sapphires or *nila* range in colour from cornflower to violet and seem to be the commonest find. Cat's-eyes, venerated as charms against witchcraft, also occur in quantity. A variety of chrysoberyl, they come in yellow and green and

shades in between. The district produces fine claret-coloured garnets, one of which was sold to the Emperor of China who wore it in his imperial cap. So brilliant was the lustre of this stone that it became known as the 'red palace illuminator'.

Chapter III

LEOPARDS IN THE MOONLIGHT

FROM the town of Buttala in the foothills of the Kandyan plateau, an ancient trail runs through the jungle to the shrine of Kataragama, oldest and most mysterious of the local gods of Ceylon. Although technically a Hindu deity, Kataragama is visited and worshipped by Buddhists, Moslems and Christians, and according to the chronicles has been a major deity since the dim beginnings of Lanka's recorded history.

Nine miles from the shrine lies Galge, an area famous for leopards. Just why the big cats congregate in the district has never been explained, but the jungle people say that it is because of the pilgrims. In the full moon of June thousands of persons wend their way along the twenty-six-mile trail from Buttala, and old people without relatives sometimes wander off the trail and die alone in the jungle. Every year there are such cases and sometimes the leopards become so fond of human flesh that they turn man-killers. During the pilgrimage of 1945 a female leopard killed fifteen persons before she was finally shot by Pieris Apu, one of the guards of the Forestry Department.

We found the good citizens of Buttala in a state of excitement and fear for another reason. The preceding evening Sahanda, a cultivator forty years of age, was going to his paddy-field to relieve his sons who had been guarding the crops against wild animals. It was about nine o'clock and the full moon lit up the landscape. When the

farmer was nearly half-way across the field toward the raised platform where his sons were watching, a bull elephant broke from the shadows of the jungle and charged after him. His sons screamed; the man ran as fast as he could, but a paddy-field is not a race-track and the bull soon caught him.

The testimony of the sons was hysterical, but the medical examiner said the elephant had kneeled on the man, crushing all his ribs, and then evidently butted the lifeless corpse with his great head. The strangest part of the sad story was the location of the tragedy. The field the man was cultivating belonged to the Kataragama temple and its name was 'the Lord's Field'.

Further investigation revealed that for the past six months this particular elephant had been destroying crops in the district. Because of these depredations, the farmers had appealed to the Government and were promised compensation. However, this was not paid and further petitions of the villagers to be permitted licences to carry guns were refused. Without firearms the villagers have no defence against the great pachyderms.

The truth was that this elephant had undoubtedly been repeatedly fired at with the ancient gas-pipes of the farmers and probably had a skin full of festering wounds. He had learned to associate man with these hurts and finally killed one of his tormentors. The next move would be for the Government Agent of the province to proscribe the killer as a dangerous rogue; then a hunter would be given a permit to shoot him.

Leaving Buttala, we started in two jeeps down the Kataragama trail, a veritable sea of mud in which we were constantly bogged. We had progressed only about three miles and were near the village of Medhagama, where the tragedy had taken place, when we rounded a corner, came face to face with an elephant, and at the same moment ran off the road into a mud-bank. No one had his gun

out of the case. We simply sat and stared at the big pachyderm; then it dawned on us that he had an iron chain round his neck and a calm and benign expression. With the utmost courtesy he swung up the bank and gave us room to pass; then it was that we noticed that the chain was tied to a log!

After eighteen weary miles through the jungle we reached Galge, literally 'house of stone', and made camp beneath the towering rock massif from which the place takes its name. On top of the highest boulder is a simple shrine to an English sportsman, J. P. Irson, who long ago discovered the sporting possibilities of the Galge country.

On the first evening's shoot I bagged a young spotted buck and Edward Fernando accounted for a wild sow. William Abeyesekera collected a brace and a half of jungle fowl, and John Friar and Chandra Gooneratne shot two brace of succulent pigeons, a couple of green and a couple of imperial. Cutting the haunches off the buck and the pig, we staked out two baits, placing them near the dry beds of streams where the pug-marks of leopard were clearly indented in the yellow sand.

As we sat down to supper, the full moon of Bakmha, or April, rose over the jungle and flooded the land with an eerie light. Far off we heard the sawing of a leopard, a strange noise that somewhat resembles the cutting of wood with a hand-saw. Closer we heard a snapping of branches and the trackers said it was an elephant making its way to the rocks behind us. Elephants like to climb the jungle rocks and then stand silhouetted against the sky while they gaze over their homeland. Then, as our votive candle burned in tribute to Kataragama, we fell into deep and satisfying slumber.

Before dawn we rose, gulped hot coffee and eggs, and moved off into the jungle. Our first duty was to visit the baits. Two leopard had already fed on the carcass of the deer, and a crocodile had devoured the sow. Even though

the Galge area is three miles from the Menik Ganga River, the big crocs often take off across country in search of supper and this one had not been disappointed.

The pug-marks showed that a female leopard had eaten and then had been joined by a big male who was evidently too polite to steal from his mate. Apparently all he had done was to sniff the feast from ten feet away and go about his business. A blind or hide, consisting of interwoven thorn bushes, was constructed about fifty feet from the small clearing in which the bait was tied to a tree. Comfortably fitted with a chair for me and peep-holes for my rifle, the hide was a professional job of a high order. Viewed from the bait, it was nothing more nor less than a dense thicket, not differing from others of its kind around the clearing.

Fernando and I took up our vigil at four in the afternoon, and as the day waned, were treated to a box-seat performance of jungle life. A raucous jungle crow, perched above us, eyed the bait and was just about to swoop down for a bit of dinner when there was a rustle in the grass and a big grey mongoose appeared in the clearing. The crow took off with a frustrated scream, and the mongoose, after racing around the kill several times and stopping every few feet to listen, satisfied himself that the leopard was not lying up near by, and began to feed.

With the coming of the shadows the birds quietened down. The whistle of the brown-capped babbler and the similar notes of the shama trailed off and ceased. The gorgeous yellow-and-black orioles stopped flitting about the jungle. High above us, against the crimson sunset, a red-winged caucal passed on his swift mission, and closer to the dark line of the trees little bats began their erratic dartings.

By eight it was pitch black ; the moon had not yet risen and we could not even see the tree to which the bait was tied. Then suddenly the steady tearing sound that told

us the mongoose was gorging himself ceased, and we heard the grass rustle as the little thief rushed for cover. A leopard or something big enough to scare the mongoose was on the prowl near the kill. Silently I shoved my double-barrelled shotgun through the peep-hole and waited. Then we heard it; the faint pad-pad of a leopard walking outside the hide and at the same time the unmistakable panting sound of a big cat. It was bad luck. There was no light to shoot by and I had visions of the leopard eating his fill and departing before the moon rose sufficiently to let me see him.

The sounds of the leopard died away, however, and a few minutes later we knew the reason for his going, for we heard the guttural grunting of a wild pig. Old boars are more than a match for a leopard, and most leopards know it and respect them. The grunting grew nearer and finally approached to within a few feet of the hide. We could smell but could not see the animal. Then a night breeze must have taken our scent to him, for he wheeled suddenly and crashed off into the jungle.

By nine, the moon rode above the palu trees and sent a sea of amber light into the glade. The mongoose did not return and neither did the leopard, but so wild and eerie was the scene that we stayed another hour enjoying it. Twice, far off, we heard the sharp bark that a deer gives when it scents danger, and once the faint rumble of a bear talking to himself as he ambled through the thickets.

The hide was about a mile from camp and as the trail to it led through thick jungle, we both lit powerful flashlights and carried our shotguns ready for instant action. On the side of most jungle trails are giant ant-hills and during the night the bears frequently dig into them in an effort to find the succulent white grubs on which they feast. A bear, surprised with his head in an ant-hill, is a very nasty customer whose first action is to charge the intruder. Most of the incidents of bear attacking men in

Ceylon have happened at night when nothing short of a charge of buckshot will discourage the bear.

We had walked about half the way home when my light picked up a pair of red eyes apparently some three feet from the ground. Such an animal would have to be either a bear or a leopard, and we fervently hoped it would be the latter. As we approached, it became apparent that it was hidden behind some bushes and was not going to retreat. Bravado seemed the best method so we both let out impressive war whoops. Hardly had they died away when out from the bushes jumped a big hare; he had evidently been regarding us from the top of an ant-hill behind the cover!

Our shoot finished, we bucked our way down the trail to the village of Kataragama and drew up, hot, tired and thirsty, at a little boutique on the main street. Only then did we remember that all of our money was in the portion of our baggage that was following us in bullock carts, the road having been too rough to risk overloading the jeeps. At this impasse a strange figure elbowed his way through the crowd of idlers that surrounded us, and in excellent English he cheerfully offered to buy us tea and hoppers (cakes of rice-flour).

From his yellow robes the man was obviously a Swami, or holy man, but he was also obviously a European. Instead of the shining shaven head of an Eastern ascetic, he sported a luxuriant crop of bobbed hair and an equally impressive spade-shaped beard of Santa Claus proportions. Behind gold-rimmed spectacles shone a pair of very merry blue eyes.

'I have no money either,' he said, 'but money is neither important nor hard to come by.' So saying he passed around his begging-bowl, and soon had a pile of coppers. The fact that one of the island's poorest men (in a monetary sense) was standing treat for the representative of the world's richest country, struck us at the same time and we laughed together.

At a table in the little boutique, he told me something of his life and philosophy. He was a German, forty-eight years old, who had come to the East twenty years before and become a Buddhist monk. During the late war, like other Germans, he was interned by the British and sent to the camp for civilian internees at Dehra Dun in north-western India. There he met Harrar, the famous German escaper who wrote *Seven Years in Tibet*; he broke out of camp with Harrar on the latter's first abortive attempt at freedom. Harrar finally succeeded, but the Swami, despite four resolute efforts, was always caught and returned. He did manage, however, to work his way into Nepal, Sikkim and Tibet, and thus widened his religious knowledge before the law returned him to the camp.

When peace came, the Swami returned to Ceylon, but, feeling that he had learned all he could from Buddhism, renounced his priesthood and studied the Hindu religion for another seven years. Now known as the Swami Gauri Bala, which means 'Child of the Goddess', he seeks the truth from all religions and persons. He has no home in the true sense but his library of philosophic books is scattered over the country in many small *ashrams* where he sometimes stays. He told me his *ashram* at Kataragama is a hut on the edge of the jungle where the elephants and other wild animals regard him as a friend.

'Why,' he asked with a gentle smile, 'don't you lay aside your gun and get to know the animals? I am sure you would like them.' He added that he used to take the son of Lord Soulbury, the last British Governor-General of Ceylon, on trips to the jungle.

He said he spoke, read and wrote Sanskrit, Pali, Hindi, Tamil, Sinhalese, Greek, Latin, French and English in addition to his native German, and told me that his studies had taught him the importance of real freedom.

'You wear a watch and are its slave,' he said. 'You think you own fine houses and suits and cars, but in reality

they own you, for you must worry over them and attend to them. Now look at me. I have escaped from these temporal things. In all the world I have only some books, the cotton robe I wear and my begging-bowl. But even this bowl I must some day part with, for it is a handsome double coconut shell from the Seychelles Islands and I am afraid I have grown to admire it.'

His basic philosophy is hard to grasp but seems to centre on simply 'being'. Freed from virtually all of the tensions and neuroses of modern life, he is sure he is leading an existence far more in harmony with God than most of his fellow men.

After tea he took Friar and me to the sacred area, where we removed our hunting knives and shoes and followed him to the little temple of Naga, the Snake God. 'If you wish to shoot a leopard,' said he, 'a small tribute to this ancient wood-god might be helpful.' We sat on a mat on the porch of the temple while the priest gyrated before a curtain on which was painted a likeness of the god and behind which was the door to the inner sanctuary, where a tame cobra was said to reside.

Next we visited the temple of Ganesh, the elephant god, and arrived just as the crash of bells announced that the ceremony of *pooja*, the feeding of the god, was about to commence. A shaven priest, his mouth bound with a yellow cloth, entered between the lines of people, and, after bowing before the curtain on which was painted the picture of Ganesh, disappeared into the holy of holies behind it. Later he emerged with a lighted lamp and the people shouted as he moved the light over the likeness of the god on the curtain.

Last we entered the temple of Kataragama, the central deity of the complex. The temple is a small stone structure of great age and, like those of Naga and Ganesh, consists of an inner sanctum and a covered wooden porch where the people congregated for worship. Incense

burned in braziers, and torches lit up the faded curtain, and an oil painting depicted the seven-headed Kataragama god and his two consorts. One of these ladies is white and the other blue. The white one is his wife and the blue one his concubine ; and every year the god, swathed in cloth, is mounted on an elephant and taken to the other end of the town where the temple of his wife is located. After being left with her for a suitable period he is returned to his own temple.

Leaving the temple we walked under the stars to the brink of the Menik Ganga, the sacred river, which the jeeps had to ford before we could continue our trip. We found, however, that the river, owing to up-country rains, was rising and there followed a heroic struggle during which the two jeeps and the heavy trailer were literally man-handled across the flood by gangs of shouting villagers.

The last we saw of Kataragama was the Swami waving goodbye in the moonlight. Freed from the wheel of things, he seemed a contented man and one to be envied.

My next try for leopard took place in August of 1954 when I booked the circuit bungalow at Okanda, a tiny hamlet on the edge of the coastal jungle two hundred and twenty miles south-east of Colombo. The tract is bounded on one side by the sea where the sands of long lonely beaches bear eloquent testimony to the game in the area. On the dunes one finds the plate-like tracks of elephant, the four-toed pugs of leopard, the almost human five-fingered marks of the bear, and the delicate slotted impression of the sambhur, the big brown deer. Behind the beaches the jungle marches inland till it reaches the foothills of the mountains nearly a hundred miles north. It is not, however, the solid wall of green that one imagines tropical jungles to be. Centuries ago in the days of the Ceylonese Kings most of the area was under cultivation, with the result that the jungle is intersected by open

meadows, vestigial remains of the ancient irrigation tanks and paddy-fields. During the monsoon, these meadows furnish the rich marshy pasturage that nourishes the herds of wild buffalo and axis and sambhur deer, but in the dry months they turn sere and yellow and the shallow lakes shrink to mud-caked wallows.

August is a dry month and the lives of the jungle dwellers are restless and fearful, for they cannot live without water and the places where water remains are few and far between. The deer drift nervously through the forest nibbling a scanty meal from the leaves of trees and approaching the water-holes with the dread of moving shadows that may mean leopards.

The elephant, except for an occasional rogue, is protected at all times, as is the wild buffalo. The season for deer and peafowl moreover does not open until November, so our shooting was restricted to the three animals which are never protected — the leopard, the bear and the boar. The only sure way to shoot the latter two is over a water-hole, and since we did not fancy this method, the object of the trip was confined to leopard — the bigger the better.

I had intended to buy an old buffalo to use as bait, but fortunately a wild one died a few days before we arrived at Okanda and had just reached that stage of rich allure that few carnivore can resist. The carcass was so strong that it was only through the really heroic efforts of Peter Jayawardana, the game ranger of Yala East, and my fellow hunters William Abeysekera and Chandra Gooneratne, that it was divided and placed around in strategic locations. By the time my daughter Rene and I arrived, everything was set and the tracks of a big male leopard could be plainly seen around the bait. He had been seen feeding that morning and there was every chance that he would return to the kill for dinner in the evening. Jayawardana told me that, judging from the pad-marks, this leopard was an unusually big male, probably measuring over eight feet and in the

prime of life. He said it had been seen quite a few times of late years in that particular area and had undoubtedly established a hunting domain of four or five square miles, inside of which it did not allow other leopards to trespass. He also said he believed that this leopard had been fired at before and would be extremely cautious and difficult to shoot.

There are those who prefer a rifle for dealing with leopard, but they are better shots in the moonlight than I am. A twelve-gauge Winchester automatic shotgun, loaded with heavy SG slugs, is not only a deadly weapon at thirty feet but gives one the advantage of a two-foot spread. I am a great believer in shotguns for the big cats and shot tiger in Indo-China with my old double-barrelled Parker loaded with solid lead slugs. Knives have little value except for skinning, but it is comforting to feel one at one's belt and I took along a *Gurkha kukri*, the wicked blade with which the Nepalese will sever a bullock's head with one blow.

At five in the afternoon I went to the hide with Karolis, the old forest-watcher, and settled down to wait for darkness and the moon. Unlike the *machans* of India and Indo-China, where one shoots from the safety of a platform some twenty feet in the air, or the fortified thorn *bomas* of Africa, the hides of Ceylon are semicircular affairs of loosely woven branches that only screen the hunter from the direction of the bait. They are so cleverly placed, however, that there is not a case on record where the hunted animal walked into one as he was approaching the bait. Nonetheless this easy rear access was not a particularly comforting fact as far as I was concerned.

Our particular hide was about four feet across and just high enough to screen both of us when we were sitting down. It was built at the base of a palu tree so that the lower branches lent themselves to the contour of the walls and the main trunk gave me a back-rest. The dark mass

of the tree undoubtedly discouraged animals from trying to force their way through it. There were a few mosquitoes whining about, but generous use of citronella kept them at a distance.

Another pest not so easy to avoid was the red ant. These little soldiers have a needle-sharp bite and inject a minute quantity of formic acid that lasts for many minutes and causes an acute burning sensation. A regiment of them attacked me and it was only by moving quickly away from their avenue of advance down the trunk of the tree that I was able to avoid a mass assault.

Except for the eerie tick-tock of the nightjar, the jungle was so still that I clearly heard the roar of the surf as it pounded on the beach a few miles away and the drone of the flies as they feasted on the carcass ten yards away and laid their eggs in it. The night wind was variable and at times our noses were assaulted by the strong stench of the bait. This unpleasantness was completely overcome, however, by the knowledge that this perfume was exactly what Mr. Leopard ordered.

By six the sun had set in the west and the moon, which was already burning pale in the east, was beginning to come into her own. Dark clouds suddenly began to pile up and by six-thirty a drenching thunderstorm struck us. In a few minutes Karolis and I were soaked through, and, even though the rain was warm and the night far from cold, a dank chill began to seep through us. We stripped off our dripping shirts and shivered in the downpour. In half an hour the rain ceased as quickly as it had come and except for distant peals of thunder and occasional flashes of lightning, the storm passed. The moon shone through the misty clouds and I noticed the deep scars on the lean back of Karolis where a leopard had sunk its claws seven years ago.

I had heard the story before we left camp. Karolis was guiding a European sportsman, when the latter shot

The leopard rose with a roar and sprang on Karolis' back

and wounded a leopard which made off into some thick jungle. Instead of following the cat himself, the sportsman ordered unarmed Karolis to go into the bushes and look for it. Karolis, who does not speak English, thought of course that he was being backed up by the hunter with his gun, and proceeded to force his way into the jungle. He had gone only about a hundred yards when the leopard rose with a roar and sprang on his back, driving his hind

feet into the poor man's naked back. Karolis spun round, threw the leopard off his back and attacked it with his jungle axe. The leopard then bounded away and Karolis, streaming with blood, looked around for the 'sportsman'.

Karolis is a slight old man who thinks he is about fifty. He wears his hair long in the Sinhalese village style and does it up behind in a bun. There are many silver and grey strands in it. He has an alert and quizzical face and a dry sense of humour. Spending almost all his time alone in the jungle, he has learned to get along without a lot of words; during the two trips I have made with him, I never remember him volunteering a sentence that I did not ask for. He is married and has five children. Before entering the forest service nine years before our trip he was a cultivator and has lived all his life in the village of Kumuna in the heart of the jungle.

By seven the clouds had gone and the moonlight was strong enough for us to see the bait clearly. I was watching intently, as this was the period, just after sunset, when leopards are most apt to eat their evening meal, when I noticed a movement just behind the carcass. Karolis saw it too and whispered 'Muketiya' or mongoose. There are four species of these useful little animals in Ceylon and this was the grey variety.

The enemies of the mongoose are the leopards, jackals and cobras. The former snap them up as a dog would a hare, but between the mongoose and snakes there is apt to be a pitched and uncertain battle. The fiction that the mongoose always wins is not true. In the pits, where these two are matched for sport, the cobra often comes out the victor, but in the jungle the odds are probably a bit longer in favour of the little furry warrior. The mongoose circles the snake and jumps when the cobra strikes, trying to tire it so that it can leap on the cobra's back and bite just behind the head. Once the mongoose has its needle-sharp teeth fixed there, the writing is on the wall for the

cobra, for soon its spinal cord will be severed. However, old mongooses are slow, and even the fanciest fencer sometimes misses his footing.

The mongoose sometimes eats very much like a squirrel and I saw it rise on its haunches, take a comfortable sitting position before the reeking feast, select some choice bits, tear them off with its paws, and proceed to transfer them to its little red-rimmed mouth with all the verve of a duchess. The well-rounded outlines suggested it was a mother mongoose.

Leopards dislike rain as much as most cats and the early deluge had evidently discouraged the local lord of the district from dining early. Furthermore, I was still soaking wet so decided to call it a night. Peter was due to come for us in the jeep about this time, and even though I did not hear the motor I did hear his faint call from the direction of the main trail. Then it was I made a somewhat startling discovery. Karolis did not hear the cry, and subsequent investigation proved that he was almost deaf! His eyes, however, were wonderfully keen and since my own hearing is good, we supplemented each other's senses.

The following morning we visited the bait early and saw in the soft sand of the run a vivid tale of the night's feasting. The big leopard had fed, then a bear had eaten and finally a boar had dined. The order of eating was clearly revealed by the pad-marks, some of which were superimposed on others.

Driving to the hide the following evening, we passed through a swarm of bambara bees, the wicked honey bees of the Ceylon jungles. It is said that fifty of their stings inject poison equivalent to a cobra bite. Not so long ago an American newspaperman I know spent a week in the hospital after an attack by an irritated swarm and told me that it was one of the most terrifying experiences in his life. The jeep was too fast for the bees, however, and we left them buzzing far behind.

Karolis and I took up our position by five o'clock and had only fifteen minutes to wait before our friend the grey mongoose appeared and made a dive for the carcass. Instead of sitting down to eat, she tore off a large chunk of rotting meat and bore it away with her. Evidently the little mongooses at home were too small to go out to dinner. About this time, I opened a tin of peanuts and cut my right index finger deeply on the sharp edge. It was not a good sign and Karolis shook his head as he helped me bind it up with my handkerchief.

On the chance that my vigil might be a long one, I had brought along a low camp-chair and a brace of pillows, with which I made myself comfortable. We also had a good supper, a flask of whisky for me and some arrack for Karolis. All of these luxuries, however, did little to ease the tension. We were there to kill the biggest leopard in the area and by all rights he should feed that night. As the twilight came, I thought of all the things I had heard and knew of Ceylon leopards and leopards in general.

Kotiya to the Sinhalese and *Felis pardus* to the zoologist, the leopard is the only one of the big cat family on the Island. Despite the fact that Ceylon is only separated from tiger-teeming India by a narrow strip of water, none of the striped gentlemen have so far crossed over. The Ceylon leopard averages somewhat smaller than his Indian cousin, adult males usually measuring between six and seven feet from muzzle to the tip of the tail. They weigh about 150 pounds and stand from twenty-two to twenty-six inches at the point of the shoulder. Colour varies from cinnamon red to light yellow and in a healthy animal the black rosettes shine against these backgrounds like ebony medallions. Old animals tend to have lighter coats, the colour having undoubtedly faded over the years of exposure. A few black leopards have been shot in Ceylon, but none in recent years. They are not a different breed, but merely a 'sport' of the common variety.

While normally avoiding man, the leopard can be an extremely dangerous antagonist under certain circumstances. When wounded, one has been known to leap straight into the hide. Waththuwa, another forest watcher employed by Jayawardana, was sitting with an Englishman over a kill when this happened. The shot only grazed the leopard's back and the great cat immediately charged the hide, springing a good twenty-five feet to land between the two men. Luckily the hunters sustained only minor scratches before they were able to bring their guns to bear and kill the leopard, but the impression made on Waththuwa is still so strong that he refuses to sit up over any more kills.

There are a few records of man-eating leopards in Ceylon, and among the most famous of these is that of the leopard of Punani, which killed and ate twelve persons before he was shot, over his last human kill, by Roger S. Agar. There are also, as I mentioned above, recurrent reports of man-eaters along the trail of the Kataragama pilgrims.

Jim Corbett, of the Indian Government Service, certainly the greatest tiger and leopard hunter of modern times, believed that leopards that get the taste of human flesh by eating carelessly cremated bodies often turn later into man-killers. His famous man-eating leopard of Rudraprayag was officially credited with the deaths of 125 men, women and children during the eight-year period of its bloody history. As already noted, the Indian leopard is generally somewhat larger than the Ceylonese leopard, the local record being eight feet three inches (A. S. Bowles) and the Indian record being nine feet four inches (H.H. the Maharaja of Nepal).

I had always known that leopards were very fond of dog and sometimes decimated the hunting packs, but I had no idea how really bold the big cats could be until I read Harry Storey's good book, *Hunting and Shooting in*

Ceylon, with its reports of dogs literally carried off by leopards as they were trotting along dutifully at their masters' heels.

There are but few cases of leopards showing affection, but Marcus W. Millet in his *Jungle Sport in Ceylon* cites the case of the leopard that was fed on fowls while being shipped to the London Zoo. One little brown hen the leopard refused to eat and, in fact, he seemed to enjoy her company. The hen lived in the leopard's cage all the way to Dover, but on the last night, the leopard, perhaps fearing that he was about to lose his friend, finally ate her.

The leopard has a highly developed sense of sight and hearing but seems to be almost completely without the ability to scent. In Indo-China, I shot a leopard while it was waiting at the river's edge and noted afterwards that it had unwittingly posted itself to windward of the deer trail which it was watching. The leopard's staple food is deer but it will eat anything it can catch. Shooting in the Punjab, I once found the shell of a tortoise that had been partially cleaned out by the claws of a leopard. Bear are left strictly alone and leopards, as I have noted, are also extremely wary of wild pig, realizing no doubt that even though sucking piglet is tasty, papa's razor-sharp tushes can slit them open like a sausage.

Monkeys are the leopard's favourite jungle dish and considerable strategy is employed in capturing them. After locating a band, the big cat proceeds to dash around, springing into one tree after another and forcing the petrified monkeys to climb higher and higher into the branches. Sooner or later one of these slender supports breaks and the monkey drops screaming to the ground, where he is immediately pounced upon and devoured. I once sat up over a bait of live monkey in the Shan states of Siam, but will never do it again. The almost human fear-reaction of the creature was more than I could take. Luckily no tiger or leopard came.

I have never seen a leopard actually make its kill, but I have examined both deer and buffalo calves which leopards and tigers have destroyed. The leopard seizes its victim by the throat and then proceeds to break its neck by forcing the head back with its powerful forelegs. They invariably eat the soft underparts of their quarry first and seem to prefer the meat after the sun has been at it a while and corruption has set in well. A leopard will continue to return to its kill until it is entirely devoured. Even with this economical approach to dining, Jayawardana told me that a leopard needs an average of a deer every seven days to sustain life. In other words, it takes a herd of fifty-two deer to carry a full-grown leopard for a year. He estimated that there are about 250 leopards in this three-hundred-square-mile district, but this is probably an over-estimate.

Lost in these musings, I had begun to doze off when Karolis suddenly nudged me gently and pointed through the loop-hole. At first I could see nothing, but then saw what appeared to be a grey shadow moving slowly across the little open space toward the tree where the bait was tied. Then, as my eyes grew more accustomed to the light — even though the moon was full its light was filtered through some white fleecy clouds — I made out the outlines of a huge leopard standing stock-still and gazing straight at me.

Silently I raised my shotgun to the loop-hole, aimed long and carefully at a point just behind his shoulder and pulled the trigger. Instead of the roar of the shell, there was only a sharp click. I had filled the magazine but had neglected for the first and only time in my life to put a shell into the chamber!

The leopard gave a single bound and vanished like a grey ghost into the dark wall of the jungle.

Chapter IV

THE GREAT RIVER

SEVEN thousand feet above sea-level, on the dank jungle slopes of the Horton Plains in the Central Province, a small mountain stream starts on a long journey to the sea. It is the Mahaweli Ganga, the greatest river of the Island, which runs its dragon course for over two hundred miles before it casts its brown tide into the blue waters of Koddiyar Bay at Trincomalee. The upper waters of this father of Ceylonese rivers are churning mountain torrents, incessantly fed by the heavy rains of the tea country, but by the time the river passes the ancient city of Polonnaruwa it becomes navigable for canoes. This is the account of a journey by dug-outs down the last sixty miles. The river is, in fact, the only way to penetrate the area, as vast swamps or *wilas* discourage any other approach.

There were many reasons why I wanted to make this trip. The Mahaweli flows through some of the least known jungle areas of the Island and those few men who had made the journey told me that they had seen swamp elephants, the rarest and most massive of the Asiatic pachyderms. The equally rare Ceylon coral snake is found in the area. Furthermore, legend declares it to be the hunting-grounds of the *rahu valaha*, the red bear, a skin of which was said to have been identified in 1815 as a new species; even though another specimen has not been obtained, the villagers still believe in its existence. Unlike the common sloth bear, it lacks the white V on the chest and has a reddish-brown coat instead of a black one. It is reputed to be savage and carnivorous.

The river runs also through one of the last strongholds of the Veddahs, the almost extinct aborigines of the Island. The Veddahs of Gunners Quoin, a great rocky outcropping in whose caves they used to make their homes, are of the Moranne tribe which was virtually wiped out by dysentery in 1930. Remnants of this tribe, however, still haunt the jungle fastnesses; it was these Veddahs that Mrs. Milward, the famous anthropological sculptress, modelled in 1937.

One chooses carefully companions for a trip like this, for the success of the venture as a whole could easily be wrecked by the fears or tempers of any one member of the expedition. My original plan was to take ten men with me, in addition to the crew and cook, but three of those invited had to drop out. The following seven made the journey: James Espy, Counsellor of the American Embassy and a good man to have along any time for any purpose; Paul Deraniyagala, Director of the Ceylon National Museums and a well-known authority on the Island's fauna and flora; Dr. Drogo Austin, leading surgeon of Colombo; Colonel Christie Jayawardana, Camp Chief of the Ceylon Boy Scouts and A.D.C. to Her Majesty the Queen; Mr. Charles Cruickshank, United Kingdom Trade Commissioner in Ceylon and my companion on a journey to the little-known Maldive Islands; T. L. Green, Professor of Education at the University of Ceylon; and Dr. Chandra Gooneratne, Director of Films for the United States Information Service in Ceylon.

Beyond giving myself the pleasure of inviting these companions, I did virtually nothing toward preparations for the journey. Dr. Gooneratne and my wife did the work and, believe me, a lot of effort goes into an undertaking which transports and feeds such a group for five nights and four days. Our point of departure on the river was not located at a railway station. This meant that arrangements had to be made to stop the train, at four o'clock in

the morning, on the far side of the Manipitiya bridge, and have about half a ton of personal effects, food and camping equipment moved down to the shore. The Government Agent of the Eastern Province had to be informed and he, in turn, kindly passed the word down to the various headmen of the river villages. There are no roads connecting these hamlets so that word had to be sent by dug-out canoe, some time in advance. Food presented another problem as there had to be plenty of it but not so much that its bulk would swamp the canoes. We planned to take shotguns, rifles and fishing-rods and we hoped that we would be able to supply at least some of our larder; my wife, however, having suspicions born of long experience saw to it that we had enough sustenance in cans to see us through, no matter what happened.

The most delicate of the arrangements concerned our transport down the river. Two of the three men I talked with, who had previously made the trip, did it in their own canvas and rubber canoes. These craft, being extremely light, presented no problems as they could easily be carried if the river was too high and fast and, drawing virtually no water, could be manœuvred more easily over the rapids if the water was low than heavier vessels. The standard river boats on the Mahaweli are dug-out log canoes. About thirty feet long, heavy and tippy, they present no problems to the rivermen who squat on their bottoms but a good many to explorers who insist on sitting on chairs. Undaunted by these technical details and the fact that he had to make his arrangements by letter — the old Moorish riverman with whom we negotiated for the canoes could neither read nor write English and had to employ a public letter-writer — Chandra proceeded to gather all the facts and then set about making them fit our needs. To overcome the risk of the canoe tipping over, he ordered two of the largest available to be lashed together; and to enable chairs to be used safely, he had flat floors built over

the round bottoms of the canoes. He also insisted that an outrigger be fitted to the baggage canoe.

Timing was especially important; heavy rains up-country could so swell the Mahaweli that the trip would have to be called off and, conversely, a long dry spell might mean a fall in the water-level to a point where the heavy canoes could not be dragged over the shallows. Accordingly, it was arranged that the irrigation officers would wire us pertinent data a few days before the rivermen started to pole up from their village at the mouth of the Mahaweli. Another wire was sent by the station-master at Manampitiya when they arrived at the bridge.

The co-operation of the Ceylon Government Railways was also enlisted; Everard Wijeyeskera, Chief Engineer, kindly saw to it that the expedition was assigned its own sleeping-car and that permission was obtained from the operating branch for the unscheduled stop.

So it was that, just before dawn on the morning of Friday, September 10, the Batticaloa Night Mail ground to a stop and we tumbled down the embankment to find a grinning committee, led by Clayton, the irrigation officer of the district, and Kudurasa, the old Moor captain in charge of the dug-out canoes. Clayton kindly offered his bungalow as a breakfasting site, and soon Perera, our cook, had an appetizing repast of fried eggs, bacon and coffee laid before us. Mrs. Clayton supplemented this by some delicious cakes made of freshly caught mahseer and jungle honey.

By seven o'clock the canoes were loaded. In addition to the eight of us, the two lashed canoes carried a brace of rivermen with heart-shaped paddles in the bows, another brace of rivermen with poles directly behind them, and a third brace, one of whom was the captain, in the stern sheets. The captain was neatly but not gaudily arrayed in a blue shirt and khaki hat with a blue band around it. His men wore sarongs and gaily coloured clothes. The cook

rode in the middle of the baggage canoe, on his own chair, under a bright-coloured umbrella and looked for all the world like some ancient sultan being poled down the river by his retainers.

As we left the shore, the crowd shouted goodbyes and I could not help thinking that they must also be doing a bit of bookmaking on the chances of our safe arrival. I had learned just before our departure that the last man to go down the river had been killed by an elephant whom he tried to photograph at too close quarters. There were also some disturbing rumours about crocodiles and sharks, and a pair of R.A.F. men who started down during the war and never arrived at Trincomalee.

The river at the Manampitiya bridge was about 250 yards wide and, except in the channel, very shallow. The irrigation officer told us that it was running about three miles per hour, but that this speed could quickly vary either way, depending on rains up-country. That the river often became a far mightier body of water was evident from the banks, which were heavily eroded.

Behind us, as we left the bridge, loomed the granite mass of Gunners Quoin looking like its namesake, a vast quoin or wedge that was used in the old days to elevate cannons. Jungle ran down to the banks on either side of the river, but in many places it has been burned to make *chena* clearings for the cultivation of tobacco. Chena farming consists of burning off a stretch of jungle, cultivating it for a few seasons and then letting it return to the jungle again. The method is wasteful of timber, destroys the humus in the soil and, of course, kills all the animal and bird life in the burned areas.

One of the most fascinating games in Ceylon is bird-spotting and, as all of us had brought binoculars, we were able to study many of the more common types. Imperial and green pigeons rocketed across the water on their earnest business. I have never seen a pigeon flying without

purpose. We heard the harsh notes of the crimson-backed woodpecker and then spied him and his equally harsh-noted colleague, the pied kingfisher. Apparently none of the brilliant-hued birds sing sweetly. Swiftlets darted twittering high in the air, and the gorgeous oriole flashed its golden sheen against the green of the jungle.

The river was reputed to hold both mahseer and gerami, so I trolled most of the way down. Unfortunately, the water was discoloured and it is almost axiomatic that mahseer will only take a spoon in clear water. Gerami, however, are fruit-eaters and can be caught in almost any kind of water providing one still fishes for them. We stopped once so that Paul could examine a section of rock strata and Christie promptly baited up with a whole fig and soon had a three-pound gerami out of the water. It was too much of a haul to the top of the bank, however, and he lost it *en route*.

Our first night's camping-ground was on a wide sand-spit about a mile from Kattuwanwilla village and only eight miles below Manampitiya bridge, even though constant criss-crossing of the river made it seem that we had covered a much greater distance. Soon after we landed, Alyarlebbe, the twenty-year-old headman of the village, made his appearance and assured us of his desire to be of service. Even though these river villages are all Moslem and as such despise *pandi*, he said he would be willing to show us where the wild pig were.

Across the river from our camping-ground, the jungle in the shape of huge kumbuk trees overhangs some ancient rocks. One of these rocks is the famous *Anakuiti* or carved head of a baby elephant, which rises from the river in a position so life-like that one could almost take it for a young elephant drinking. No one knows how it got there or when it was carved, but Paul, after a careful study, thought that it dated from the fourth century of our era. Before the carved head the river forms a deep whirling

pool about which the villagers seemed to hold some superstitious belief. It was not until later, when we were all in swimming, that the Moorish captain came running down to the bank and yelled at us to stay in shallow water. Chandra translated that there were crocodiles in that stretch of the river and a particularly big one was said to infest the pool before the elephant's head.

The truth of this claim was made crystal clear that evening ; in the glare of a powerful flashlight we made out the baleful eyes of a huge crocodile lying on the bank just above the pool. Further examination revealed other sets of eyes on the same bank. The headman said that many of these crocodiles spent the day hidden in the jungle, in order to avoid hunters, and then crawled down to the river at night to feed. He added that twenty of the village's best cattle had been eaten by these monsters during the past year and only last week four were taken in one evening. As the average bull weighs at least five hundred pounds, it takes considerable strength on the part of the saurian to handle it. The crocodiles wait nearly submerged near the banks and seize the cattle by their noses when they are drinking.

In the cool of the evening, Paul and I took our rifles and followed a villager to the haunts of the pig. He took us first along the bank of the river where we examined the ingenious device by which water is drawn up to irrigate the tobacco fields. A leather sack, with a cornucopia type of bottom, is lowered to the river by a rope which is attached to a pair of bullocks. The sack fills with water and as it is drawn up another rope tightens on the narrow bottom and closes it. Then, when the water is raised to the requisite level, the rope governing the narrow end is released and the water pours from it into the irrigation sluice.

We were then led to a vast park-like *wila*, or dried-up swamp area, where we found numerous tracks of elephants and many heaps of dung. After examining this, Paul said that it contained virtually no bark and consisted mainly of

grass. These elephants, he thought, were undoubtedly the swamp variety which we were seeking, but a long walk in the waning sunset and frequent sweeping of the open spaces with the glasses failed to reveal any pigs or elephants and we turned back to camp.

After a good dinner of soup, casserole and peaches, we sat in the moonlight and talked of the jungle and its superstitions. Christie, who said he did not believe any of these things, still wears a pendant of 'the nine precious stones', a charm said to be proof against anything from charging elephants to old age. Paul told us that the pig was not only taboo to the Moslems but since, along with the peafowl, it was supposed to be the carrier of some of the minor Hindu gods, it is considered very bad luck to shoot it in many districts of Ceylon. This taboo was especially strong in the extreme south where the powerful Hindu god Kataragama holds sway. One of the few things we forgot to bring along on the expedition was a candle. No wonder we did not find a pig. Unless a candle is burnt to the Devio or deity of the jungle, it is virtually impossible to make an important kill.

Paul also told us that the rock formations of Ceylon are among the oldest in the world. Most of the rocks of Europe and America have been ground up frequently by various agencies such as ice, water, etc., while the rocks of Ceylon have not suffered these changes and are the same formations that perhaps existed at the time the earth cooled.

The night wind blew its cooling breeze down the river and drove the mosquitoes from the sand-spit. Nevertheless we slept under nets and, except for the occasional sharp sting of the black ants, were not bothered by insects. No leeches or ticks were apparent even though all of us made long treks into the surrounding jungles. There is a good deal of malaria in the river villages, but strict instructions had been issued about taking paludrine and everyone had begun these precautions at least a week in advance.

The second day's start was late — eight-thirty — and the old Moor shook his head and said we had to cover a lot of river before we arrived at our next camping-ground. It had evidently rained during the night, for the river was deeper and faster. We passed families of monkeys, the *macaques*, the 'red' monkeys that do so much damage to the farmers' crops. As we paddled farther north-east, the plantations became fewer and by the middle of the second morning we were passing through long stretches of virgin jungle. More birds were seen; turquoise-blue Indian rollers, lacy-white egrets, white-bellied sea-eagles and flocks of yellow, green and orange-green pigeons.

The Moorish crew were interesting types with facial characteristics very different from both the Sinhalese and the Tamils. These Moors are said to be the descendants of the Moplahs of South India who migrated to Ceylon many years ago, and have preserved many of their institutions, including their religion. Their trousers, over which they wear a sarong, are full in the crotch and have no fly. What relation this has to the Prophet's allowance of four wives is anyone's guess. They are very clannish and give their headmen a good deal of respect. Their women are not veiled but invariably cover their faces when they see strangers.

The canoes are made from giant mango logs. They are hollowed out with an iron adze and take about three months to make. They are worth 600 rupees and our captain owns five, making him a rich and respected man in his community. The launching is an elaborate ceremony. Everyone in the village comes; the priest or *lebbe* cuts the throat of a goat and there is a feast. The canoes are used mainly for fishing in the ocean. Without the aid of outriggers, they are paddled or sailed out of sight of land.

Perched on a dead tree was a hawk eagle, one of the contenders for the dubious honour of being the devil-bird, the dreaded bird of ill omen whose cry the villagers believe

will announce death. Dr. R. L. Spittel, the historian of the Veddahs and a well-known naturalist, has spent a lot of time in this area and believes that either the hawk eagle or the honey buzzard makes this terrible cry. He describes it as the scream of a woman being murdered. W. W. A. Phillips, the ornithologist, however, is sure that the devil-bird is the forest eagle owl.

Soon after we passed the hawk eagle, Drogo Austin, who was sitting next to me in the adjoining canoe, gave a shout to the effect that he had dropped the telephoto lens of his camera overboard. The river at that point was narrow and fast but fortunately only about waist deep. Tom Green had the presence of mind to note where the lens had dropped. He intimated that this quick reaction was due to his early poaching experiences in England when, occasionally, he had to dump his shotgun overboard. The canoes were stopped and, while two boatmen held them against the current, the rest of us plunged in and, forming a line, waded over the area. Christie, the last one to join the line and the most dubious about its success, promptly found the lens. Trust the Boy Scouts to make the miracle rescue of the year!

We continued to pass deserted *chena* clearings but the jungle pressed close on them and as we rounded a bend we came on an elephant slide, the place where the herds descend the steep bank to drink and bathe. It was near there that the photographer was killed.

A thin villager hailed us and shouted that he and his family were hungry. Evidently he thought we were Government officials making a circuit. A bit farther down a whole tribe of villagers waded out into the stream and bowed to us as we passed.

At shortly after noon we reached the jungle-shaded island where we intended to camp for the second night. Instead of stopping for lunch and having the chore of unloading for the noon siesta, it was decided to do the full

day's run during the morning and then make permanent camp for the afternoon and night. Shortly after we landed it started to rain and came down for half an hour as only a tropical thunderstorm can.

When the rain stopped and we had lunched on ham and salmon, we made an inspection of the island and found many signs of elephants. Piles of dung, looking like small hillocks, spotted the beach and down at one end of the island were a mass of tracks showing that the place must be a favourite crossing-place for the great beasts. Paul was sure that we were now in the country of the swamp elephants, and when a villager came with a report that a herd had been seen on the edge of a neighbouring *wila* we immediately asked him to guide us to it. Drogo and Christie were busy shooting pigeons for supper and Chandra and Tom were supervising the pitching of our tents for the night. The elephant party, therefore, consisted of Charlie, armed with a Leica camera, Paul with a pair of binoculars, Jim with a shotgun and me with the ·405 Winchester.

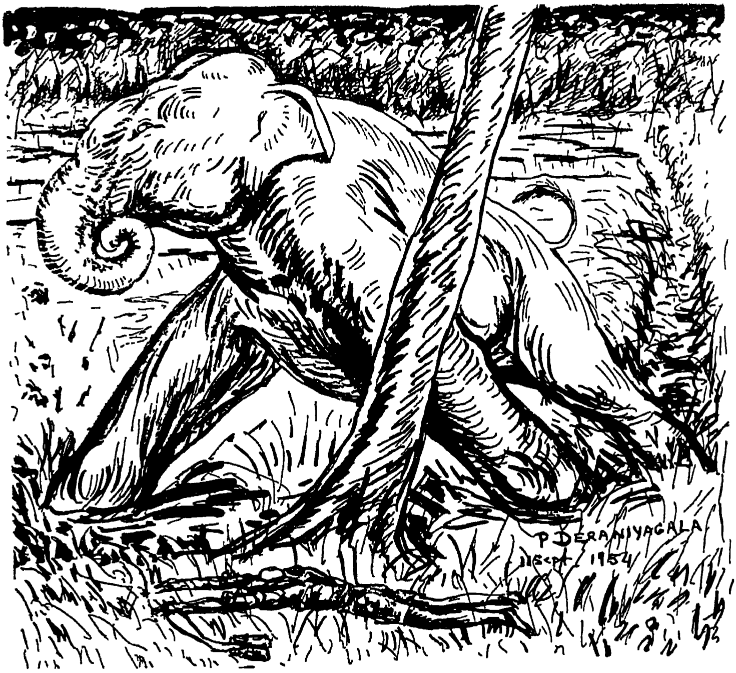
Crossing a narrow bit of tobacco cultivation, we found ourselves on the edge of a vast swamp which stretched for hundreds of acres towards the distant line of the jungle. The going was difficult; not only did we sink to our knees in the mud but the grass, three feet high, further impeded our progress.

Suddenly our guide stopped dead and pointed. There on the edge of a clump of swamp elm we saw four huge brown shapes moving slowly away from us. Through the glasses they were brought close and I saw the massive trunk, the lack of visible tusks and the greater than normal bulk that characterize the swamp variety. The herd consisted of three cows and a bull, with the possibility of calves hidden by the high grass.

I was quite satisfied and had no desire to go closer, but Paul, with the scientist's insatiable curiosity, decided to try and get closer to the herd. Accordingly Jim, Charlie

and I halted where we were and watched Paul and the guide creep along the edge of the cover toward where the elephants were last seen.

Then suddenly we heard a terrifying scream and the big bull, his trunk curled up and his ears cocked forward, charged straight out of the bushes toward the luckless pair. Evidently the elephant saw the boy first and started to charge him. The boy, however, quickly dived into a clump of cover and the elephant, cheated of his prey, saw Paul standing in a clear space and changed his direction. Paul was then faced with a grim dilemma. He could not possibly run to the edge of the jungle before the elephant reached him. A quick glance, however, revealed a single tree standing alone some fifteen yards away, and Paul, spurred by



The bull, with the poor eyesight of all elephants, rushed past him

the continuous screams of the charging bull, managed to struggle to this tree and fell down flat behind it. The bull, with the poor eyesight of all elephants, rushed past him and on into the jungle. As he reached the point where I last saw Paul, I fired over his head, hoping to turn him. The range was at least 150 yards and I did not dare try a body shot as I might only have wounded him and made him even more dangerous to Paul.

Charlie and I, who had seen the whole drama, had no idea whether or not the elephant had stepped on Paul in its charge and I was preparing to go and find him when Paul and his boy appeared. The boy was three shades whiter, but Paul, even though he knew he had had the luckiest escape of his life, managed to appear cheerful and unconcerned. I was never happier to see anyone in my life. The prospect of bringing him back in a sardine can had appeared all too probable. Jim Espy had heard the bull scream but did not see the charge and did not realize, until I told him, how really close a call Paul had had.

Later Paul told me more about these wild elephants of the Mahaweli *wilas*. The first hunter to note them was Sir Samuel Baker, who commented a hundred and fifty years ago on their great size. At the turn of the twentieth century Harry Storey, perhaps the most famous contemporary big-game hunter in Ceylon, first suggested that they were a distinct race of the Ceylon elephant. Neither of these men, however, were scientists and it was Dr. Lydekker of the British Museum who gave the first expert opinion, but, since he had no specimens, he had to base his conclusions on Storey's descriptions. E. L. Walker, a planter who wrote a book *Elephant Hunting in Ceylon* (1920), gave the most accurate descriptions of the swamp elephant. It was not until 1936 that Paul, while working in this area, made a detailed study of them and discovered characteristics by which they could be scientifically distinguished from the other elephants.

He named the sub-species *Elephas maximus vilaliya*. The type skull, shot by E. L. Walker, is now in the Colombo Museum and the paratype is in the British Museum. Paul thinks there are probably not more than fifty or sixty of these elephants left in Ceylon, and virtually all of them are concentrated in the swamp wildernesses of the Mahaweli. It would certainly be wise of the Government to declare some of these *wilas* as game reserves to protect the remnants of this interesting sub-species.

Scarcely had we settled down for the night when we heard trumpetings and great splashings at the end of the island, a distance of only about five hundred yards from the tents. A herd was crossing the river, and having caught our scent, the members were sounding their resentment. We built up the fire, loaded rifles and waited. The herd passed on but, soon after it had melted into the opposite jungle, we heard the trumpetings of another herd converging on the island from the up-stream end. There was no doubt about it, the island was a favourite stamping-ground for the local herds and the dung we saw should have told us this. But we were tired and had dined well off pigeons shot by Drogo and fish caught by Tom, and even though all of us must have said a private prayer, we soon dropped off to sleep.

The morning of Sunday, September 12, dawned grey and cold and it looked as if the north-east monsoon, which had given us a taste of its pleasures the previous evening, might have set in for a long spell. By eight o'clock, however, the sun broke through the clouds and the river steamed in the pearly light. Soon after the sun came out, the captain spotted a solitary elephant feeding, with his back to us, on the edge of an abandoned strip of *chena*. Landing, we advanced cautiously and examined it. Although a bull, this elephant was considerably smaller than the one that had charged Paul and, since the wind was blowing from him to us, there did not seem to be much chance of his

playing up. I brought my ·405, however, and cautioned everyone against going too close. Drogo took colour movies, Tom, Charlie and Paul, black and white stills, and Jim secured colour stills.

Many varieties of birds of prey were seen: the brahminy kite, the marsh harrier and the white-belted sea eagle. We were alerted by Paul to try to find the broad-billed roller, one of the rarest birds in Ceylon. For many years it was thought to be extinct until Mrs. Darnton discovered a pair in 1950 in this general area. Over the jungle we spotted a hovering kestrel, which later dived like a fighter plane on some luckless mouse.

The canoes hummed with activity. Paul did water-colour sketches; Drogo trolled; Charles photographed birds; Tom told highly amusing tales of his academic life in London; Chandra worried about details and kept the men in line; Christie carried on animated conversations in Tamil with the crew; Jim got out and waded beside the boat with his gun for shots at passing pigeons.

By eleven-thirty, we left the last *chena* cultivation and started through virgin jungle, lush tangles of great trees, cable-like creepers and matted grass which bore little resemblance to the sere and stunted bush of the dry country.

Unlike the russet yellows and browns of the Wanni, the prevailing colour is deep green relieved occasionally by the brilliant purple flowers of the Pride of India and the yellow blooms of the golden mohur. We passed great stretches of it indented here and there by the muddy slides by which the elephants descended to the river. The banks had been crushed down as if by a giant bulldozer and in the mud were the huge platter-like impressions of elephant feet. There were so many of these elephant slides that there was no question but that large numbers of the pachyderms must live in the district. And soon after

this, we saw one drinking from a pool in the river. Farther on, we saw another and soon after that a third. All of them had the typical huge trunks of the swamp variety.

At two-thirty, we passed the junction of the Mahaweli and the Kuru Ganga, or Elephant River, and instead of having to get out and help the crew drag the canoes over the shallows, we found ourselves in a great broad river where the poles were laid aside and only the oars were used to help the current. We ran into several violent thunder-showers which soaked us thoroughly, but such was the strength of the sun we were soon dried. The Moor captain, while reasonably proficient in handling his boats and men, had no idea of distance. At noon, he said our night's camping-ground was four miles away; at one-thirty, he again said it was four miles away; and at three p.m., it was still four miles away.

The ever-new fascination of sailing through untouched wilderness more than made up for lack of lunch, especially since we had plenty of cans of Mr. Schlitz' product that made Milwaukee famous. Beer tastes good any time but on a jungle river it takes on the quality of nectar. Actually, we were never uncomfortably hot as there was always a breeze on the river and the thunderstorms periodically cooled the atmosphere. Lady-like as it may seem, the umbrellas proved a real boon as they not only kept us reasonably dry during the lighter showers but shaded us from the sun.

The Lanka palu, the parasitic vine which eventually kills its host tree, made gloomy caverns in the jungle and, as we passed close to the banks, we could look down these dim forest aisles. Often a crash of branches indicated that an elephant or a sambhur deer had started away on catching sight of us. Once we saw the cleverly concealed hut of a poacher — perhaps one of the forest Moors who make a precarious living killing deer and crocodiles illegally and

selling them. The white belly skin of a crocodile brings three rupees an inch in the Colombo market, so it is not strange that the saurians are becoming rapidly scarcer or much wiser. One of our boatmen shot a small four-foot specimen which Paul, in 1932, described as a *Crocodylus palustris kimbula*, a sub-species of the Indian mugger. The main difference between the two is in the number of the scales, the Ceylon race having more.

Another difference between the Ceylon and the Indian crocodile is the former's propensity occasionally to attack man. There are two species of crocodiles in Ceylon, the estuarine, most of which are man-eaters, and the swamp crocodiles, which inhabit the tanks and rivers. There lives today in the tidal reaches of the Walawe River at Ambalatota a giant crocodile which is credited with at least a dozen victims. He inhabits a favourite bathing-place and it became necessary to put up a wooden fence in order to protect the swimmers from the brute. All efforts to trap or shoot this reptile have proved futile.

In the late afternoon, we spotted two huge elephants, a bull and a cow, wading slowly across the river in front of us. The Moor captain cautioned us not to make a noise as the elephants are quite as much at home in the river as they are on the land and he knew of several cases where they had charged straight at canoes, capsized them and then tried to locate the terror-stricken occupants by smelling them out, even though they dived as often as they could.

Accordingly, the boatmen rested on their oars and we drifted down silently on the pair who, by the time we reached them, had just mounted the opposite bank and were standing there facing us, the bull a bit in front of the cow. Again I noted the unusual size of the trunk, particularly at its base, and the absence of tusks. As we slid past, everyone took pictures while I drew back the hammer on the ·405 — just in case. The pair suddenly gave a

start and plunged off into the jungle. The total number of elephants seen on this expedition was eleven, more swamp elephants than had been reported for years.

Although we passed many likely camping spots, the old captain kept insisting that, unless we went on, he could not guarantee to get us to Trincomalee by the deadline the following evening. We strongly suspected, however, that his real reason was fear of elephants and he finally admitted that there was no point in carting passengers this far down the river to have them made into jelly. The result was we skipped lunch and at five in the afternoon he finally, though somewhat dubiously, turned our bows toward a long spit of sand bordering an abandoned *chena* clearing. The first thing we saw on the sand were the fresh tracks of a big elephant.

Eating is certainly one of the most important events of a camping trip and we were really lucky in having secured the services of John Perera. A thin little wisp of a man of fifty, with his long silver hair tied in a bun behind his head and his three remaining teeth permanently exposed in a broad grin, John proved himself capable of dealing with really grand meals under the most primitive circumstances. He even produced tea in a pouring rain. His reputation as a jungle cook was long established, for he was the cook chosen by Christie to officiate for the Governor-General when Lord Soulbury went on his expeditions into the jungle. John has a long record of Government service, having been employed at Queen's House since the days of Sir William Manning in 1925.

Our last supper in the jungle was a triumph of culinary art. Aided and abetted by Drogo, John produced a savoury mess consisting of chop suey, fried Bombay onions, fried bacon, shredded cabbage, boiled rice, two tins of mushroom soup, one tin of tomato soup and pre-cooked bully beef. Needless to say we slept the sleep of the just and paid no attention to Tom when he declared that he

had heard an elephant splashing near us. In the morning he was proved completely correct, for not more than fifty yards from the camp were fresh tracks showing that the big fellow had waded across the river, stood for a moment gazing in the direction of the tents, and then lumbered across the beach to the jungle. Tom's efforts in keeping a roaring fire going undoubtedly had something to do with the elephant's unwillingness to examine the intruders more closely.

Left alone, there is no doubt that elephants would take no more notice of man than they do of any other animal, but in Ceylon the poor beasts have been shot at for so many years that there are probably few alive that do not carry festering sores resulting from bullet wounds. The villagers shoot at them only to protect their crops, and the guns they use seldom have the penetrating power to kill an elephant. The nails, glass and other unmentionable projectiles that they fire from their ancient gas-pipes, make nasty wounds, however, and certainly account for the elephants' hatred of man.

The lower waters were too muddy to make trolling worth while but, according to Paul, the river carried some tempting prizes. There is even a species of sawfish that runs up from the Bay of Bengal and has been caught at Alutnuvara, 130 miles from the sea. Sand sharks and rays are also reported to have been caught at Manampitiya, the jumping-off place for our voyage.

At a jungle clearing, where we saw a hut, we landed and questioned the Tamil owner. He proved an intelligent chap who acts as caretaker for a vast estate formerly planted in fruits but long since abandoned. He has been on the estate for ten years and, being fond of sport, was able to tell us a lot about the local fish and game. He verified the fact that shark, ray and sawfish are caught in the river and said he eats all three of them. He also shoots many crocodiles and was currently trying to destroy the local monster

which, he said, measures twenty feet in length by four wide and accounts for many cattle.

He said the country is full of bears and leopards, and only two days before a leopard had killed one of his Brahmin bulls. It was still early in the morning so, thinking that the big cat might be having a late breakfast, I asked him to guide a party of us to the kill. Jim and I led the expedition with guns ready. About half a mile along a jungle trail, we began to smell the rank pungent smell of rotting flesh and soon came on the corpse. It was very high, with swarms of hornets as well as flies feasting on the carrion. On the soft sand around the kill were the pugs of a big leopard; they had been made since the last evening's shower.

The Tamil told us that he fished in the great *wila* as well as in the river and caught giant snakeheads weighing over twenty pounds. Paul explained that these are air-breathing fish which must come to the surface every five minutes if they are not to drown. Behind their gills they have a little chamber that allows them to live out of water for four hours. As the swamps start to dry out, these fish wriggle to the deep pools and so survive the drought. The Tamil name is *irru viral* and the Sinhalese name is *ara.* They are about two-and-a-half feet long and very broad, the head alone being nine inches across. They have dark-olive backs covered with blue spots; golden-yellow bellies and diamond-shaped black marks on the sides. The mother fish guards her fry and has been known to leap into the air after a kingfisher. Near Galle, the villagers will not eat these fish as they have been seen to leap up and pull snakes from the branches of overhanging trees.

The last stretch of the river before we arrived at the bay was the most exciting of the trip. Sunken logs, whirlpools and rapids made the old Moor captain fairly fume with curses and brought a frenzy of action from the crew. We had some close calls but got through without a wetting,

or, more important, a brush with the crocodiles. When we stopped on a sand-spit for lunch, we were solemnly warned not to swim. We did, but stuck close to the bank. I got a minor scare from a six-inch fish that tried to bite me on the bottom. The setting of this last jungle meal was the most spectacular of the trip. Great kumbuks, festooned with *lianas*, hung far over a deep pool, and the sunlight slanting down through this green fan fell like pieces of amber gold on the water. We ate our sausages, baked potatoes and hard-boiled eggs and sadly departed.

We reached civilization in the shape of the river port of Muthura about two p.m., and, landing at the rest-house, had a cup of tea before we paddled down to the town wharf and disembarked. Muthura is an old town, famous for only one event. In the year 1660 the frigate *Anne*, of the Honourable East India Company, was lying off this village when agents of Rajasinha, King of Kandy, sought out her captain, Robert Knox, and invited him and some of his men to come ashore and pay their respects. They foolishly obeyed and were speedily captured and sent inland. Captain Knox later died but his son, Robert Knox, Jr., survived twenty years as a prisoner and finally escaped. I have a first edition of his book, *An Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon in the East Indies*, printed by Richard Chiswell of London in 1681.

In the town is an ancient tamarind tree under which Knox talked with the King's envoys. Massive as it is, it would not be standing today if it were not for the efforts of Christie, who twenty years ago, when he was a forest officer, had a brick wall built to support the trunk.

Towards evening a launch took us across the harbour to Trincomalee where we boarded the train for Colombo. John Perera cooked us a last supper and we drank a final toast to the jungles of the lower Mahaweli Ganga. May they always remain as unspoiled as we found them.

Some time after my trip down the Mahaweli, I lunched with Dr. Spittel and became so intrigued by his tales of the Veddahs that I arranged to spend a night in one of their ancient caves. The following sketch was written after this trip.

From the mouth of the cave of Dougala, the rock massif fell away sharply so that one could see, as if from a window, the green carpet of the jungle stretching into the distance. Here and there the far plain was broken by great granite outcroppings similar to the one from which the cave was born. In the middle distance lay the whale-shaped rock of Dimbulagala and beyond it, pale against the setting sun, the foothills of the Kandyan range. A wilder or more beautiful place it would be hard to find in all of Ceylon, and on this particular evening it had a special significance, for, seated on a small rock before the cave's mouth and gazing out over his former domain, was one of the last of the Veddahs, a member of one of the world's oldest primitive tribes.

He was a man of past fifty with long black curly hair, a thin expressive face and the shy wild eyes of a jungle-dweller. He wore nothing but a gee-string supporting a wisp of loincloth and carried a small axe with a long wooden handle. Despite the fact that supper was bubbling in the pot and we had had a long hard journey to the cave, the old chief never took his eyes from the darkening landscape. 'I wish I had never left the jungle,' he muttered in Sinhalese and then admitted with a sigh that he should not have let himself get to like tea and sugar, to him the lotus foods of civilization.

The origin of the Veddahs is pure legend, but there is no doubt that the dying race is among the most ancient in Asia. According to the *Mahawansa*, the classic chronicle of Ceylon, Vijaya, a banished Aryan prince from India, invaded the island in 543 B.C. and married Kuveni, a Yakka (or Veddah) princess. Just as soon, however, as

Vijaya was assured of his supremacy over her people, he cast aside Kuveni and her children and married a South Indian princess. Kuveni was murdered but her children fled to Adam's Peak and became the forefathers of the Veddah race. This is the legend, but anthropologists believe that the race was well established long before the advent of Vijaya and that the Veddahs are, in fact, the aboriginal peoples of Ceylon, one of the earliest types of the human race.

Certainly the few remaining Veddahs differ physically from the Sinhalese and Tamils, even though there is probably an admixture of both of these stocks in their blood-lines. Like the chief who accompanied us to the cave, most Veddahs are short, wavy-haired people of a blackish-brown colour, neither as light as the Sinhalese nor as mahogany-coloured as the Tamils. Unlike the hirsute Sinhalese, they have virtually no hair on their bodies and only the most Chinese-like moustaches. Their general demeanour, even in the case of those who now live in constant contact with civilization, is still shy and wild.

Though there are still small groups of Veddahs to be found in other sections of the Island, their ancestral hunting-grounds were the arid jungles of eastern Ceylon, and it was there that I arranged, through the courtesy of Tore Hakansson, an expert of the International Labour Office of the United Nations, not only to visit a Veddah village but to take some of the Veddahs with me to one of the jungle caves where they used to live before the Government forced them to accept the dubious blessings of civilization.

The Veddah village is known as Ginidamana and lies a few hundred yards back from the main Polonnaruwa-Batticaloa road, about eleven miles from the former town. It is a sad little settlement of some five mud and thatched cottages put up ten years ago by the Government. Small plots of land go with each cottage, but even if the Veddahs were willing to work their *chenas*, which they are not, the

crops could not support them. Obeysekera, the old Chief, was allotted one acre for his family consisting of his wife and seven children. Obviously the only way he could begin to support them was by poaching, since the Veddahs' well-known penchant against any form of hard work effectually prevents them from being offered jobs on the roads.

He was delighted to be going back to his ancestral jungles, and, gathering together a rusty shotgun, his axe, his son and a nephew, was bundled into the rear of one of our three Land Rovers. The trail to the cave began with a faintly marked cattle path which soon petered out and was lost in the glades of the jungle. These grassy glens surround islands of jungle and open fascinating vistas at every turn. Only the old Veddah knew the way and, perched on the hood of the leading Land Rover, signified the directions with a series of grunts.

Frequent dry or almost dry river-beds lay across our path and, since it was usually necessary to lighten the vehicles for the sharp up and down grades, I took the old Chief's son with me and went scouting ahead of the caravan. There were many signs of elephants; trees broken as if by a giant hand and then left dying over the trail. In the swampy areas of the glades, wild pig had rooted up the grass and left a maze of trenches. The bleaching bones of a young sambhur testified to the accurate spring of a leopard. Bronze-wing and imperial pigeons flew out ahead of us and I shot a brace for the table.

After a hard three hours' trekking, we finally came to outcroppings of rock and the Chief signified that we were near the massif of the caves. The sun had sunk and the quick evening of the tropics was fading rapidly into night. Hurriedly unloading the trucks, we burdened Veddahs and drivers and followed the Chief up the side of the rock face. As there was an excellent chance that a bear had settled in his erstwhile home, I trudged behind him with a loaded shotgun.

As we climbed, we came on ancient carved stones and the ruins of a small dagoba, one of the bell-shaped temples of the early Buddhists, clearly indicating that the peak had once been inhabited by monks. The cave itself was reached only by a circuitous approach between two huge rocks and was, in fact, so well protected by them that a single resolute man could have easily defended his home. Formed by a great overlay of living rock, which had been chiselled smooth on the inside, the cave was about thirty feet long and fifteen feet deep. It was high enough for me to stand only about half-way in from the mouth. Toward the rear wall fitted stones formed a kind of rough floor and around the edge of the roof a drip-line had been cleverly carved.

As hunger got the better of the old Chief, he left his lonely perch and, squatting by the fire, answered my questions as he swallowed his supper. I asked him first of his hunting, for the chase was the immemorial way of life of the Veddahs.

'In the time of the dryness,' said the Chief, 'I was tracking Kankuna, the sambhur, in the twilight when Kariya, the bear (literally the black one), suddenly attacked me. I threw up my hand to guard my throat and hit him with all my force in the neck with my axe. He bit my hand badly but went away.' In the firelight he showed me the old white scar across his fingers.

Then he told of Both-Kanda, the elephant. 'Out of the tank lumbered the bull and seeing me fishing by the bank came fast at me and knocked me down.' Again he pointed to scars, this time long livid ones on his leg, where Both-Kanda had evidently stood on him. He hastened to add, however, that this particular elephant was not a vicious one. He did not see the Chief and stepped on him by mistake.

Veddahs move like shadows through the jungles and are much more likely, especially at night, to tread on snakes. The Chief said he had been bitten once by a cobra but

suffered no ill effects as he immediately applied his snake-stone. The so-called stone is a piece of porous bone which, when pressed firmly against the wound, absorbs most of the poison. Asked if he feared the python, he said no, as they seldom attacked human beings, but his sister's son had once been attacked by a python and only escaped by dint of chopping the snake in two pieces with his axe.

The Chief learned to use a bow and arrow when he was a boy, but his father owned a muzzle-loader which he inherited when his father died when he was twelve years old. The old gun kicked like a mule, but brought down the game. So quietly can the Veddahs stalk an animal that they seldom need to fire at more than a dozen yards' distance. The gun was only used for meat; he relied for protection on his *caraki*, or little axe.

The various local gods of the ancient Veddahs have not survived to the Chief's day, but he believed, like any Tamil or Sinhalese, in the Kataragama Devio, a grim jungle deity which derives its name from the war-god of the Tamils. (Devio is the term for a local deity and is preceded by the name of the god of the particular location.) The worship of Kataragama is very old and, according to Buddhist annals, King Maha Sen was at Kataragama when Buddha visited the place in the sixth century before Christ.

Some of the superstitions of his race still persisted even in the semi-civilized village where he now lived. He told me, for instance, that when he left his home he simply closed the door and hung on it a V-shaped branch, as a sign that the contents of the hut were protected by his magic. No Veddah, he claimed, would dream of ignoring this charm.

I asked him to sing us some of the songs that he remembered from his childhood in this cave, and, throwing back his head, he chanted a guttural lullaby which, translated, runs along these lines: 'Baby is crying because he is sleepy and mother has gone to bring water and father has

gone to hunt deer'. He sang the song in Sinhalese, and except for a few names of animals apparently knows no Veddah words at all.

Marriage is a simple arrangement among the Veddahs. In a few rare cases a hunting dog may be given as a girl's dowry, but usually the only ceremony, besides a feast, is the tying of a twisted fibre, or *dia lanuwa*, around the groom's waist by the bride. He is supposed to wear this symbol for the rest of his married life. The Chief, however, had long ago lost his talisman and told me that the custom was dying out.

The Chief's name, Obeysekera, is a common Sinhalese surname. He told me that his grandfather was named Mutuwe and his grandmother Vali, both Veddah names. He had forgotten his father's name or possibly did not want to tell it to me. The Veddahs, like the primitive Mois among whom I lived for a period in French Indo-China, often disliked to mention a person by name but referred to him as 'the tall one related to me', etc. Even the Gurkhas of Nepal seldom called their British officers by name. The Colonel invariably had the title of 'little father of the war'.

There was no moon but the stars were so bright that an eerie light lay over the jungle and it was just possible to distinguish objects some yards away. 'A good night for hunting,' said the Chief and, borrowing a handful of SG shotgun shells from me, he fitted one into the rusty breech of his old gas-pipe and disappeared into the gloom. Half an hour later we heard one report and later another. Shortly afterwards the Chief returned to the cave saying that he had killed a leopard and a deer and had hung them out of harm's way on a tree. The Veddahs believe that leopard meat is good medicine for numerous diseases and the Chief assured me that the flesh of this one would be completely consumed by his people in the village.

The fire was dying by this time and, even though it was

barely nine o'clock by civilization's timing, it was late in the jungle. Before turning in I made a careful circuit of the cave, sprayed the walls with a D.D.T. bomb to ward off spiders and knocked my stick against the shells of old ant-hills to be sure no cobras were in residence. The interior of these mountain caves is invariably cool and, as the night progressed and the evening breezes blew in from the jungle, it became cold enough for blankets.

Near dawn I woke and, rising quietly, threaded my way between the cots to the cave's mouth and up on to a look-out rock near the entrance. A thin sliver of moon was riding low in the sky and the jungle was quiet with the hush that precedes a new day. Soon the first faint rays of light appeared in the east and our night in a Veddah cave was over.

The time of the Veddahs is almost over too, and anyone interested in them and their ancient ways must turn to books for first-hand knowledge. The first anthropologist of stature to study and write about the Veddahs was Dr. C. G. Seligmann of the University of London, whose book, *The Veddahs*, written in 1911, is still the standard work on these people.

But the Veddahs' greatest friend and historian is not a trained anthropologist but Dr. R. L. Spittel of Colombo, the kindly medico who has vividly recorded the last days of the Veddahs in his numerous books about them. *Wild Ceylon*, published in 1924, and *Far Off Things*, published in 1933, give one a rounded and revealing picture of life in the Veddah country, while *Savage Sanctuary*, 1941, and *Vanished Trails*, 1950, reconstruct the life of the Veddahs in novel form.

Chapter V

RAINBOWS IN THE TEA

HIGH in the mountains of south central Ceylon, some of the best trout streams in the East wind their sparkling way across upland grasslands where leopard, sambhur deer and wild boar drink at their pools; then wander down valleys green with tea and finally plunge over beetling cliffs to drop thousands of feet to the low country. It is as scenic a land as one could find in all Asia, and when to this setting is added the shining presence of rainbow trout, little more need be said in its praise.

Rainbows and tea are more closely associated than one would suspect, for, if it were not for the fact that the tea planters are mainly British and therefore quite unable to live happily without their sport, the ova of *Salmo shasta*, the famous rainbow of the Pacific coast of America, would never have been imported into Ceylon. The rainbow has been a success since the first eggs were hatched at Nuwara Eliya in 1899. Not only has it adapted itself, perfectly, to the high waters of the country but it has shown its contentment by a prodigious interest in breeding.

Today the Ceylon Fishing Club stocks some fifty miles of streams, ponds and lakes and for very modest fees permits fly fishing and some spinning on a great variety of fine waters. The cost of fishing in Ceylon is only a fraction of the rate prevailing for comparable sport in England or the United States.

A season licence for a non-resident of Ceylon who joins

the Club comes to only 165 rupees ($33, or £12 : 7 : 6) and entitles the holder to fish from January 1 to October 31. Daily, weekly and monthly rates are in proportion. Hotel accommodation is always available in Nuwara Eliya and there is even a good chance that fishermen who are unable to bring their own tackle will be able to borrow some from resident members of the Club.

Every country has its famous rivers and, by common consent, the best fishing in Ceylon is found in the stream that runs through the Horton Plains, a series of grassy *patnas*, or meadows, lying above the 7,000-foot level. Rising in the Kotapola Range, the stream runs for seven gin-clear miles across these highlands and then leaves them, a burst of roaring anger, at the Galgamuwa Falls. In late June 1954, Charles Mackie and James Epps, both keen fishermen and long-time pillars of the Ceylon Fishing Club, and I visited the Plains.

Nothing but a horse or a jeep can climb the seven perilous miles from the main road to the Hortons and, through the kindness of Archibald Waring, manager of the Diyagama Tea Estate, we were provided with one of Mr. Willys' stalwart vehicles. It was drizzling when we started and the rain glistened on the serried rows of tea bushes and rushed down myriads of rivulets to form roaring torrents in the valleys. There is always the pleasant sound of running water in this land of tea.

We began the trip at an elevation of 5,000 feet and by 6,000 had left the cultivated area and were bumping over a rocky trail cut from the virgin jungle. Rhododendrons stretched their gnarled and flowered arms across the way, the jungle trees sighed in the whipping wind, and the mist swirled out of the valleys and enveloped us. Then, suddenly, we emerged from the jungle and found ourselves on the edge of a vast *patna*, a rolling sky meadow that stretched away to the distant line of the forests. These are the famous plains where Sir Samuel Baker used to hunt his

elk-hounds a hundred years ago and concerning which he wrote so many stirring tales.

The rest-house is a comfortable old pile whose common rooms are decorated with the tracings of record trout and the desiccated and moth-eaten heads of ancient sambhurs and wild boars. The keeper provided a good lunch and by two o'clock I was on the stream. The rain had long ceased and high white clouds spun across a sapphire-blue sky. At that altitude the sun is powerful and a hat and glasses are a wise precaution against a bad burn. The stream runs deep and clear in a series of dragon curves. It is not easy to fish, being far too deep to wade and, owing to the tussocks of coarse grass that line the shores, hard to fish from the banks. On numerous occasions, I stepped trustingly on to a tussock only to have it give way under me and let me fall waist-deep into a marshy hole. I am referring only to the stretch of river near the rest-house that I personally fished. There are all kinds of water on the Hortons. Long quiet stretches, where one must use the thinnest of leaders and cast well ahead, fast rapids where the trout take almost at one's feet, and great dark pools below the falls where the really big fellows lie against the current like veritable submarines.

All of the major pools have names and some of them conjure up dark deeds of long ago. Golgotha Pool was the scene of the murder of a party of pilgrims from Uva on their way to Adam's Peak. Many years later the skulls were seen grinning from the depths. Tiger Pool was so named because leopards were wont to use its shallow neck to cross the river and many were shot there. There is still an eerie atmosphere about the plains, especially when the mist drives over the bare hills and the silence lies heavy on the land. Literally there is no sound but the wind. The only living creatures I saw in my wanderings along the stream were the old gnome-like watcher and one small swallow. Once I heard the distant 'bell' of a sambhur and

near the jungle wall a faint chattering that might have come from the big upland wanderoo monkeys.

I started fishing with a small March Brown on a 4x leader, but finding it ineffective changed to an Alexandra. I had made only a few casts with this new fly when I noticed a boil in the water just behind it and slowing down the rate of my retrieve felt the solid pull of a big trout. I was fishing the pool just below dam number six. This is a small deep trough of relatively fast-moving water and as

He bent my rod nearly double

soon as the trout felt the hook he swam strongly down it. As I noted above, the footing is so uncertain that I did not dare try and follow him but gave him line instead. He took all I had and then bent my Orvis $3\frac{3}{4}$-ounce rod nearly double before the pressure was too much for him and I was able to reel him slowly back. The current was with him and it was a good ten minutes before I brought him close enough to see him.

As all fishermen well know, it is hard to estimate truthfully the weight or size of a dead fish, much less one ten feet away and four feet down in the water. I would say conservatively, however, that this trout was a good four-pounder. There is one sure way to find out. Go and catch him, because just after I saw him I grew too eager and tried to lift him to the surface where I could get my net under him. With a heavy shrug he threw the fly and, turning casually, swam slowly back to the depths.

The net bag for the trip consisted of twenty-one good trout, averaging $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound each. Epps caught the biggest, a fine cock fish tipping the scales at 1 pound 4 ounces. Mackie caught the most and I lost the biggest. But best of all was a roaring fire, a hot bath and the knowledge that only a hundred miles away it was ninety degrees in the shade.

There are other waters that I have enjoyed equally, and high among them must be placed the Nuwara Eliya, a stream that is often ignored on account of its location, for most of its $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles of length runs through the park, the golf course and the town of Nuwara Eliya. Despite the hazards of whizzing balls and grinning onlookers, the little stream provides some first-class sport and has seldom failed to provide me with my limit of good ten- to twelve-inch fish.

I believe the reason for the Nuwara Eliya's fine run of fish is to be found in the fact that it empties into Lake Gregory from whose depths the spawners run up the stream

to breed. The Fishing Club hatchery is located on the Nuwara Eliya and, of late years, most of the fry raised have been hatched from ova and milt stripped from fish netted in the upper waters of this most useful stream.

Another stream that holds great charm for me is the Bula Ella. Miles of this stream run through virgin jungle, and even though many of the pools and shallows are extremely difficult to fish, owing to overhanging vines and trees, the wild beauty of the setting more than makes up for lost flies and leaders. The soft banks are deeply rooted by the snouts of wild pig, and once, on a sand-bar, in the middle of a long shallows, I saw the pug-marks of a leopard. Kittasamy, the old watcher, is always there to lead one, and poor is the fisherman who can't grapple with some one- to two-pounders in the pools of the Bula Ella.

To my mind, however, the most spectacular water of the Island is the river that rises high in the jungle fastness of Adam's Peak, and is later known as the Rajamallie, Corfu and Adam's Peak stretches. Perhaps its charm is due to the dominating presence of the sacred mountain, a place of worship since remote antiquity, and perhaps to the sheer beauty of the fast clear water and the setting of ancient jungle.

The Adam's Peak estate bungalow lies in a little valley over whose towering bastions tumble two magnificent torrents of water, the Gartmoor and the Adam's Peak falls. The streams meet soon after their descent and form a great foamy pool in whose depths fabulous trout are said to lurk. I did not catch any fish on my one trip to these waters but I saw some heavy trout and moved several big fellows during the evening rise.

I am indebted to Philip Benham for data on the record trout caught on flies. His uncle, Philip Fowke, caught a 6 pound 12 ounce rainbow in 1916 from the Watermeet Pool of the Agra Oya, and in 1945 Gilbert Anderson, the then custodian of the Horton Plains, took a fish of exactly

the same weight from the Reservoir Pool. A Mr. Plate caught a brown trout of 14 pounds $4\frac{1}{2}$ ounces in the Nuwara Eliya Lake in 1903, but Mr. Benham says that Mr. Fowke, who was a witness of this great event, indicated sadly that the monster was taken on a worm.

The pioneer of trout culture in Ceylon was Hugh L. Hubbard, a planter of St. Johns Estate, Uda Pussellawa, who successfully raised twenty brown trout from ova imported from England and in 1882 put them into the Nuwara Eliya stream. His experiments roused great interest and in 1886 a group of his friends subscribed 3,000 rupees to finance further importations from England. By 1893 the fishermen were sufficiently well organized to form a group known as the Trout Fund Committee with 72 dues-paying members. The cost of fishing was 30 rupees per subscriber, and 800 fry were turned into Nuwara Eliya stream in April of that year.

These brown trout evidently thrived, because the early records eulogized the sport they showed and noted that a large number of those put in the stream were subsequently caught. In November 1894 a $7\frac{3}{4}$ pounder was taken from the stream, and in March 1896 a giant of $8\frac{1}{4}$ pounds was killed.

In 1898 H. V. Morefield caught a huge brown trout of 9 pounds while it was being pursued around a pool by an otter.

So successful were these early efforts that it was decided to form a more permanent organization and, at a public meeting held at the Hill Club at Nuwara Eliya on January 18, 1896, the Ceylon Fishing Club came into being with the appointment of a governing committee of twenty-two members and a sub-committee of four to draft rules. C. M. Lushington and A. W. Jackson were elected joint secretaries and His Excellency the Governor the patron.

The most important objective of the newly formed Club was to come to an agreement with the Government of

Ceylon regarding the leasing of the waters to be stocked, and none can complain that the committee did not make a good bargain. An annual rental of 100 rupees entitled the Club to stock and protect from poaching all waters above the 4,000-foot level. This in effect gave the Club rights over several hundred miles of streams, even though only about fifty miles were subsequently stocked and patrolled.

The brown trout imported by the Club were showing grand sport but there was no evidence that they were breeding in the streams. Careful observation at the hatchery indicated, in fact, that the hen and the cock brown trout seldom came in season at the same time. The brown trout, furthermore, were inveterate cannibals and tended to decimate their own ranks. Mr. Lushington, in one of his early reports, stated that he left four small fish of about two inches each in one of the troughs of the hatchery. Ten days later he found that one of these trout had grown to three inches while the others had vanished, ostensibly down the gullet of their voracious companion.

In an attempt to import a fish that would breed in Ceylon waters and be less prone to cannibalism, it was decided to experiment with rainbows, and accordingly a shipment of ova was brought from England in 1899. This proved so successful that the following year 5,000 ova were purchased from the Otago Acclimatization Society of New Zealand. Many of this latter shipment were put into the Horton Plains stream and by 1902 there was definite proof that these rainbows were reproducing themselves at a most satisfactory rate.

In 1906 Henry C. Wilson, a professional trout culturist, was retained by the Club to survey the waters, build necessary dams, hatchery ponds, and generally improve the fishing. His report noted that the worst enemy of the Ceylon trout was the native poacher. These sly fellows used basket traps, set-lines and poison. Wilson caught two of them behind the grandstand on the Nuwara Eliya

racecourse and the magistrate gave them ten lashes each.

Studying cannibalism in trout, Wilson came to the conclusion that they bred abnormally fast in Ceylon and in this process developed unusually large heads. Later, when the trout started to decline, owing to old age, the thinning body appeared out of all proportion to the head and it was during this shrinking period that the trout turned cannibal. By inspecting the gullets of trout of this odd appearance, he found a far higher percentage of cannibal remains than in the normal trout.

Wilson analysed the food of Ceylon trout and found that they ate mainly crabs, shrimps, dragonfly larvae, stone-fly larvae, mayfly larvae, caddis worms, beetles and snails. The trout seldom rose to flies, however, and George Fowler suggested that English mayflies be imported to tempt them up. A large shipment was made from England but without any lasting results. Wilson believed that large gaudy flies were the most acceptable. He also noted that most Ceylon streams have overhanging banks and the angler must be careful to tread warily on these banks lest the vibration warn the lurking giants beneath.

The next great student of trout to appear on the Ceylon fishing horizon was Philip Fowke, and it can truly be said that he did more for the sport than anyone before or since. A scientist as well as a sportsman, Fowke devoted many years to the Ceylon Fishing Club and has left us a mass of vivid and revealing reports. He took over the direction of the hatchery in 1913 and remained a pillar of the Club until his departure from the Island many years later.

His reports are enlivened by numerous anecdotes. Returning from snipe shooting one afternoon, by way of Lake Gregory, he was accosted by a friend on the Galta Bridge who told him excitedly of a monster trout that was even then cruising along the banks of the lake. Hurrying to the indicated spot, the friend showed him an enormous

brown trout, thirty-six to forty inches long and weighing at least 25 pounds. Subsequent efforts to get this submarine to bite proved fruitless; he was either too well fed or too smart.

Fowke spoke eloquently of the voracity of the rainbow. In June of 1909 he was fishing the Bula Ella and caught a fine 5 pound 10 ounce fish. Following his usual custom he proceeded to clean it and found to his amazement that it was full of corned beef. He then remembered that the preceding night he had opened a can of such beef and, finding it in an unpleasantly high state, had thrown it into the stream. On another occasion he caught a 2-pound rainbow with a pronounced swelling on one side. Cutting it open he found the gullet to contain part of the udder of a cow and one teat. Fowke does not, however, say that the trout had digested the remainder of the unfortunate cow!

Cannibalism does not seem to be quite as common among rainbows as among browns but it is far from rare. Fowke says that he observed a five-inch rainbow kill and swallow his three-inch brother. The bigger fish seized the smaller one by the middle, crushed it and then devoured it head first. Rainbow fry are very active; Fowke reported tiny one-inchers leaping up twenty-five inches in attempts to reach the lip of the pipe which brought fresh water to their pond.

Fowke was a faithful historian of the Nuwara Eliya stream and took the trouble to figure out that this most useful reach of water yielded anglers 29,021 fish during the four-year period of 1917–21. This figure compares with 24,768 trout taken from all other rivers during the same period. Even this bountiful stream had its tragedies. In 1918 a cask of Jeyes' Fluid, a particularly strong disinfectant, was being unloaded at Cargill's store and fell on to the road where it broke open, and the contents ran into the little brook that flows into the Nuwara Eliya stream at

Ricketty Bridge. Literally hundreds of trout were killed, among them a handsome 7 pound 8 ounce rainbow.

Ever since the Phoenicians caught trout on hooks wound with wool and feathers two thousand years ago, fishermen have been tempting this prince of fish by artificial lures, and of all flies invented the dry fly certainly provides the most exciting fishing. Unfortunately the rainbows and browns become bottom-feeders in Ceylon and it is difficult to get the larger trout to rise to a dry fly. R. A. G. Festing, in the 1914 report of the Club, said that the only water-bred fly seen in any numbers in Ceylon is the mayfly, which can be seen often on the Horton Plains during March and April. He further noted that this fly, possibly owing to the faulty education of its ancestors which existed in these streams before the introduction of the trout, had the bad taste to hatch during the closed season. He added, however, that there is a small yellowish white fly, found on wild ginger, and the common horsefly.

My own experience has been that Alexandras, small greenish flies tied around a silver base, are very effective in the more coloured waters, and dark flies, such as black gnats, appealing in the gin-clear streams like Adam's Peak, the Hortons and the Gorge. Toward sunset or on cloudy days, I have used coachmen and other big light-coloured flies with some success.

Many streams are so overgrown with jungle that casting is not possible and I found that good results could be had by simply floating the fly down close to the banks, then letting it sink and retrieving it slowly. On warm days, I have used the same technique with dry flies and had quite as good luck with them as I did with wet.

Even though the rainbows and browns of Ceylon grow to giant proportions, there was always worry about their diet, and one enterprising gentleman, A. H. Armitage, imported some snails from England with the idea of breeding them in the local streams as an additional source of

trout food. He had strong boxes constructed with perforated zinc sides so that the mature snails would be kept in confinement while the babies would be able to slip through the holes to the river. There was only one flaw in his planning. He clean forgot the wild elephants and, sure enough, the first thing the brutes did when they saw the boxes by the water's edge was to burst them open.

Elephants were not the only enemies of fishermen in the early days ; otters have always been accused of decimating the trout, and rewards are still paid for their extermination. There is considerable difference of opinion, however, as to the amount of damage these pretty animals may do. Examination of the droppings seldom reveals fish scales, but a good many large fish, with the unmistakable claw-marks of otters, have been found on the banks of pools. Fowke reported the discovery of a 20-pound rainbow on the banks of Lake Gregory. This fish had evidently been caught by an otter which first broke its backbone and then towed it ashore for supper.

While fishing the Bula Ella in May of this year, I saw a pair of otters swimming round a big pool. They were having a fine time calling to each other in low clear cries. One of them was much smaller than the other and possibly a cub whose mother was teaching it the fine points of fishing. There is no question but that otters scare the trout, so I did not attempt to fish this pool, but I believe it would be hard to prove that they are responsible for anything like the harm they are credited with. Otters abound on many of the best trout streams in England and studies of their stomachs have revealed that trout play only a minor part in their diets.

A more sinister enemy of the Ceylon trout is the *buckamoonah*, the brown fish owl. Fowke believed that these birds of prey made heavy inroads on the trout and are capable of lifting a ten-inch fish out of the water and flying off with him. On several occasions, he saw them

hovering over the shallows and seizing migrating trout that were making their way upstream to breed.

But perhaps the most interesting contribution that Fowke made to fishing history was his discovery that many of the so-called rainbows, in his day, were not rainbows at all but steelheads. He based this deduction on the tendency of big trout to migrate toward the sea and since the true rainbow, *Salmo shasta*, is not anadromous — in other words does not hatch in fresh water and then, like a salmon, run to the sea — he came to the conclusion that some of the ova which were imported from England and New Zealand must have been those of the steelhead or *Salmo rivaris*. These varieties look a great deal alike and only the expert can definitely tell them apart by such exotic means as scale counts. There is no doubt, however, that the rainbow, whose home is the McCloud River in the Pacific Northwest, is not anadromous and that the steelhead, found in almost all the rivers of the Pacific Coast, most definitely is.

The introduction of trout into Ceylon was a milestone in trout culture. Previous to the Nuwara Eliya importations, trout were believed to be unable to exist south of the 24th degree of latitude. As a result of the success in the Island, however, trout were sent to and now flourish in such unlikely places as Malaya, the Nilgiri Hills of southern India and the island of Mauritius. Credit must certainly go to that small band of Scotsmen and Englishmen who couldn't let a little thing like the Equator hinder their sport.

Chapter VI

BINOCULARS AND SHOTGUNS

ONCE every four hundred years the sky dragon rises in anger and swallows the sun. He cannot digest such a hot potato and soon disgorges it, but during the time of his vast and fiery meal strange things happen on earth and particularly in the Island of Ceylon. Thousands of citizens dose themselves with ayurvedic (ancient Hindu) drugs to induce beauty, health and vitality, and end up, violently ill and perhaps wiser, in the hospitals. These manifestations have a long historical record and are expected, but the effect of the eclipse on the birds, beasts and fishes of the Island had never been studied nor reported upon, so it was with this purpose in mind that a small expedition, of which I was a member, set out for the jungles of the Wanni in late June of 1955.

The Wanni, literally the wild country, is one of the least populated and least known areas of Ceylon. Stretching for thousands of square miles over the dry zone of the north, it is a land of dense jungles, short-lived rivers and featureless flatness. Only three motorable roads cross the territory, and apart from a few small towns there are no urban centres. Most of the inhabitants live in scattered villages deep in the jungles where they have little contact with civilization, and in most cases they do not miss it. The true *Wanni minissu*, or men of the Wanni, are lazy, generous people who prefer hunting to farming and sleeping to working.

The particular area where we hunted and explored was

the district of Panankamam, an area of some five hundred square miles situated almost exactly half way across the Island. From Mankulam, our jumping-off place on the main Anuradhapura-Jaffna road, to Mullaittivu on the Bay of Bengal is thirty miles and it is twenty-seven miles in the opposite direction to the village of Vellankulam on the Gulf of Mannar. There is only one road through the area, an ancient dirt trail impassable during the monsoon and difficult at other times.

Although the purpose of our trip was primarily scientific, we hoped also to shoot some of the big game of the area. Leopards, bears and pigs were numerous in the district and, being unprotected by the game laws, could be shot all the year round. Sambhurs, spotted deer and some of the smaller game birds were illegal at that time of year.

Our party consisted of Paul Deraniyagala, Director of the Colombo Museum; Samuel Rasaratnam, the famous elephant hunter; Dr. Chandra Gooneratne, an amateur anthropologist; John Friar, an attaché of my Embassy; Sam T. Solomons, retired teacher, and myself. We had four trackers, led by Kanthar, the well-known old shikari of Karuppadaimurippy, two drivers and three servants.

Camp was made by the bank of the Pilu Aru some seven miles from Mankulam on the aforesaid trail. The tents were pitched on a bluff from which the land fell away fifty feet to the rocky bed of the stream. Towards the end of June, it was the beginning of the dry season and, even though there were deep pools in the river, the water had ceased to flow; by August the Pilu Aru would be dry. According to Rasaratnam, there were six crocodiles inhabiting the river near camp, and by the sandy bank of a green pool just around the bend we found the slithering track of a big mugger. The river was full of fish, mostly loolas, a good eating fish which must have been carried by the seasonal floods down the Aru from their breeding-places in the ancient tanks where the rivers rise.

As the ruins of these tanks indicate, this area of Ceylon was once the home of a thriving civilization. It was also, unfortunately, the border region between the Tamil Kingdoms of Jaffna, in the extreme north, and the lands of the Sinhalese Kings, farther south, with the result that all of the numerous invaders from southern India had first to fight their way across the Wanni.

But perhaps the most terrible invaders that ever attacked the inhabitants of the Wanni were the malarial mosquitoes. Soon after the death of the great Sinhalese king, Parakrama, early in the thirteenth century, and the subsequent decline of Sinhalese power, this deadly scourge began to spread over the area. At the same time, according to the Sinhalese chroniclers, the Tamil conquerors did not have the knowledge to maintain the great irrigation works, known as the 'Seas of Parakrama', and the jungle began its remorseless march over the five thousand tanks adjoining waterways that the king and his predecessors had constructed with so much care and toil. The Tamil historians, of course, have a different viewpoint and claim that many of these northern tanks were built by their early kings and ruined by the Sinhalese.

Be this as it may, the jungle now rules the land, and the temples of Siva and the stupas of Buddha have both crumbled into the dust. In their place we found a tiny shrine to Aiyaanar, the Hindu wood god, before whose silver arrow, mounted on a stone, our trackers burned little cakes of camphor.

The previous week tracks of leopard had been seen near a jungle pool some five miles from camp, and subsequent investigation had revealed that a pair of leopards were drinking nightly at this pool. The leopard follows the deer, and the muddy margins of the pool were churned by the slot-marks of sambhur and spotted deer. As the area was not in one of the restricted areas, it was permissible to shoot leopard, but since the moon did not rise till late, we

had to rely on the stars for our shooting-light during the first part of the night. The jungle, however, was not more than fifty feet from the pool and as the water was surrounded by a border of gleaming white, dried mud, we found we could distinguish objects with relative ease.

By four in the afternoon, we had finished our hide and were just settling in when a fine spotted buck moved cautiously out of the opposite jungle and advanced toward the pool, sniffing the air. It was out of season for deer, even if there were not an unwritten law that one does not shoot them at water-holes. Although the wind was blowing from him to us, he was highly suspicious and, after examining the terrain carefully, he decided there was something wrong and with a single bound vanished into the cover. By eight the stars were out and, except for the chirping of the crickets, the jungle was silent. At eight-thirty we heard the rumbling of a bear and soon saw its grey shape near the pool. Bears have poor eyes but very keen noses and, like the buck, Bruin soon sensed danger. I remembered then that I had ordered some of the rushes to be cut near the water and it was undoubtedly the human scent on the stubs of these rushes that had bothered the animals. As the bear neared this cut area it suddenly stopped dead, screamed and made off into the jungle. I could easily have shot it but preferred to wait for a leopard. Later we heard more deer and about midnight a 'sounder' of pig came grunting out to drink. Soon after that I dropped asleep, first telling Kanthar to wake me if he saw a leopard. I woke at dawn to find the old boy looking sheepishly at the tracks on the edge of the pool. There in plain sight were the huge marks of our leopards; both had drunk at the pool at some time during the night.

In order to find the best place to observe the effect of the eclipse on the fauna, we spent several days exploring the area both by jeep and by foot and came to the conclusion that the bund or embankment of one of the

ancient tanks offered the best possibilities. Not only were these tanks the nesting-places of many species of birds but we hoped also to see buffalo, deer and possibly elephants.

Among the tanks we visited was Mundumurippu, literally the 'tank of the three bridges'. Under the ancient bund, which had been restored of late years by the Government, was a little village of three houses where the evening meal was being cooked. A woman was grinding paddy and an old man told us that elephants drank nightly at the tank and often invaded his rice-fields. We walked along the bund and I studied the swamp birds through my glasses. Egrets, lapwings, a stork-billed kingfisher and a colony of baya weaver-birds were soon located. Leaving the village, we had proceeded about half a mile down the trail when Kotelawala, the driver, slammed on his brakes and shouted 'Cobra'. Then we saw it, a six-foot monster of a snake, with vividly marked hood and beady malignant eyes; for a moment it faced the jeep and then slid off into the jungle before I could bring my shotgun to bear.

At the jungle village of Kidapidathakulam we heard the throbbing of drums which Rasaratnam interpreted as the making of *pooja* in honour of a Hindu god. Stopping the jeep, we walked through the night to where a lantern was burning in the centre of a group of seated figures. The priest received us graciously and showed us the little cloth hut in which rested the goddess Mariaman of Kunchukulam. The image consisted of the silver head of a woman around which were draped numerous garlands of flowers and silk. The priest told us that he and the goddess live at the village of Kunchukulam but spend most of their time on circuit, visiting sixty villages a year. Rasaratnam said that the drummers were members of a debased pariah tribe, and in India would be known as untouchables. There were two drummers, armed with great resonant-sounding instruments with which they kept up a constant throbbing

refrain. At the height of the *pooja* ceremony conch shells were blown.

The north of Ceylon is populated largely by Tamils from India who have kept many of their Hindu beliefs and social customs. The next village we came to, Kandalweli, was inhabited entirely by a barber caste. This does not mean that the men spent all their time cutting hair and shaving others; many, in fact, were cultivators, but as members of the barber caste they performed necessary functions for their fellow Hindus. Weddings, funerals and other ceremonies demand the presence of barbers just as they also demand the presence of certain other castes such as the dhobies, or washer caste. This interdependence of the various castes is a strong cementing agent in the Hindu world.

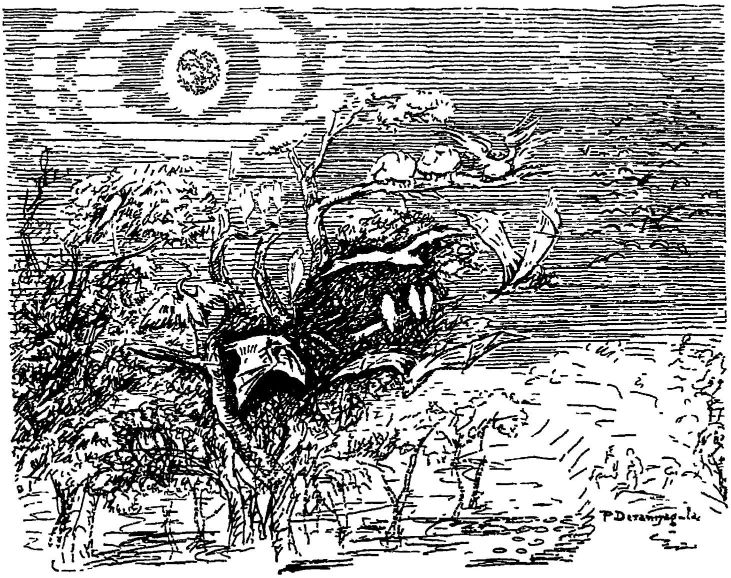
Not all the jungle people live in villages. Off in the jungle, some ten miles from the nearest habitation, we stopped to call on Kirito, an old Tamil hermit, whom Rasaratnam had known for many years. It seems that, before the first world war, Kirito's wife had left him and, taking this event far more to heart than most of his fellow villagers, he up and moved to the wildest and most lonely part of the jungle. There he built a little mud hut, dug a well and collected a small flock of goats. In the fertile bed of an ancient abandoned tank he grew a little paddy and became virtually self-sufficient, going only once in several months to the village for salt and gunpowder. He had an ancient muzzle-loader with which he killed deer and wild pig. He was also contemplating killing bigger game, for the elephants had come a week previously and destroyed his entire paddy crop, the work of many months of painstaking toil.

In the evening of the last day before the eclipse, we went to Kalvilan and knew immediately it was the place we were looking for. A vast stretch of semi-submerged jungle which was flooded several years ago by the restoration of

a very old bund, the tank was in the centre of a big jungle area. Most of the trees had died and on their gaunt white skeletons perched a myriad of birds. I recognized pelicans, darters, cormorants, adjutant storks, open-billed storks, painted storks and a dense assembly of flying foxes, the big fruit bats. To get some idea what this universe of birds would look like in the air, I fired a shot and the heavens were soon dark with birds all protesting according to their best abilities. Fully three-quarters of them were bats and, of course, not birds at all. The baby bats simply emerge from their mothers as they hang upside down and remain glued to her belly until they are big enough to take off by themselves.

Rising at four in the morning, we drove to Kalvilan tank in the chill pre-dawn and arrived at the bund just as dawn was breaking. It was not a clear morning and low clouds hung menacingly over the black water. By seven the skies cleared a little and, between the banks of cloud, we had a good view of the beginning of the 'great eating'. At first the gradual vanishing of the sun seemed to have no effect on the birds, but by seven-thirty, when half of the flaming orb had disappeared, there was a restless stirring on the tank. Virtually all the birds began to utter cries and there was much flying around. Egrets and cormorants that had been fishing at the marshy edge of the water suddenly took off and sailed towards their roosting-trees. An Indian darter that had been gliding through the water almost at our feet uttered a harsh cry and flew to the nearest tree and perched. A fleet of pelicans soon followed suit, and by the time the real twilight arrived with the almost complete eclipse, all the day-flying water birds were off the surface of the tank and established in trees. At the same time nightjars began to give their weird calls, and far off in the village I heard a cock crow.

The birds seemed to regard the eclipse as merely an incredibly short day, but the bats, who have to fly many



The eclipse in the Wanni

miles for their nightly meal of fruit, were visibly agitated. They rose by the thousand and began an agitated circling accompanied by high squeaking cries. Then, and as the light failed more and more, small groups left the circling mass and took off across country toward their nightly feeding-grounds. We saw these bats returning to their roosting-trees nearly half an hour after the eclipse was over.

Although the tank was reported to be full of crocodiles, we were not able to see what effect, if any, the eclipse would have on these lethargic saurians. When looking at the surface of the water, I noticed that many of the tank fish — probably loolas and geramis — were rising during the twilight period. These rises ceased as soon as the sun was fully out again. Two water-buffaloes, who were asleep in a mud-hole near the tank's spillway, evinced no interest whatever in the phenomenon.

Strangely enough, the most dramatic effect of the

eclipse on the big mammals was seen within a few miles of our camp. As the light failed, a herd of six elephants broke out of the jungle, snapped the barbed wire surrounding a cultivated area and began to feast on the young rice. The peasants were so scared by the event that they continued to cower in their huts and made no effort to scare off the marauders.

Our trackers were uneasy during the period but stood up remarkably well to the strain. Questioned as to how he felt, old Kanthar told me that he had had a good life and, if he had to go during an eclipse, he guessed it was as good a time as any. Another member of the expedition, who was supposed to be a good Christian, spent the time shaking on his cot while proceeding to drain virtually a pint of my last remaining bottle of Scotch whisky.

We ate well in the jungle: I was particularly interested in the manner in which Rasaratnam had wild boar prepared. A young boar was first singed, then ripped up the middle and gutted. The heart, kidneys and liver were doused in yellow fluid from the gall bladder, a process that gave me some qualms. Finally the organs were dropped in the fire and cooked to a turn much in the manner of our barbecuing. The results were delicious. Another local delicacy was honey which we purchased from the villagers. Gathered wild from the storehouses of the jungle bees, this honey was dark molasses colour and the sweetest I have ever eaten. The bees are very dangerous and it seemed unfair to pay a few rupees for a quart of honey which a man may have risked his life to gather.

We were lucky in the weather as well. Cooling breezes blew strongly across the Wanni during the entire time we were there and at night it was necessary to sleep under a blanket. There were some mosquitoes, possibly malarial ones, but all of us were fortified with paludrine tablets. Ticks and leeches, the pests of jungle living, were con-

spicuous by their absence. The place where I typed this account was typical of the jungle scene. Under the shade of a giant kumbuk tree on the high bank of the Aru, I could look down into a sunlit pool where a wild water-buffalo took his midday ease with only his black snout protruding from the water. Brilliant flycatchers flitted through the jungle, and from a near-by thicket came the sweet call of the shama.

On our last night in the jungle, we sat before the fire and talked ; I was able to get Rasaratnam to tell us something of his jungle experiences. A kindly, grey-haired man of fifty-three, Samuel Rasaratnam is an ex-school-teacher who is affectionately known as 'master' over the length and breadth of the Wanni. He taught at Hartly Methodist College for twenty-six years and has been the mentor of a good percentage of all the educated people in the Point Pedro area of the Island. Always keen on hunting, he killed his first elephant when he was twenty-one. It happened this way.

A woman was drawing water from a well when her dog started barking at something among the palmyra palms. To her horror an elephant emerged from the shadows and chased her and the dog back to her hut. She had barely rushed inside and luckily run out of the back door when the elephant hit the hut with his trunk and brought it down. Racing through the jungle to the next village, a matter of a mile and a half, she got herself all torn by thorns and when she arrived at Rasaratnam's house she was streaming with blood. Strongly moved by her pleas, he borrowed a ·500 Rigby, got permission from R. N. Bond, the Government Agent, to shoot the rogue, and set off after him with Kanthar. Two days later he shot the bull. Since then Rasaratnam has killed over a hundred and fifty elephants, all of which were proclaimed rogues.

In 1953 he was requested by the Government to rid the area of Kandavalai-Paranthan of a herd of two hundred

elephants, which was devastating the paddy-fields. He was not allowed to kill any of these elephants but nevertheless had to move them some twenty miles. He did this remarkable feat with the help of three trackers and a supply of number eight shotgun cartridges. For the benefit of those of my readers who are not familiar with shotgun loads, it should be noted that number eights are used for snipe. The light sting of these charges was sufficient, however, to drive the herd.

Rasaratnam's most famous hunting feat had to do with a leopard. A little boy came running in from the beach with a tale that he had seen a sea turtle. His older brother went to investigate, and, seeing something yellow under a bush, approached it. Out from the cover charged a big male leopard and clawed him badly. He was able to run to the village where he raised a hue and cry. Rasaratnam was immediately informed and, loading his shotgun with slugs, sallied forth to the beach. Three hours and one bad clawing later he shot the leopard ; a hair-raising adventure, which he told simply and effectively.

Few men have written of the Wanni, but two who knew it and wrote vividly about it were John Still, whose *Jungle Tide* will always remain a classic, and a little-known civil servant named Jones-Bateman, who described his years in the Wanni in his book *A Refuge from Civilization*. Writing of the peoples of the district, Jones-Bateman said, 'They are a lazy shiftless lot, and have no material ambitions. The inhabitants, both Sinhalese and Tamils, are all high caste and why should they demean themselves by working ? They are like their own jungles, gentle and peaceful ; and they are the most honest, friendly and generous people in the world. But I do not mean to catalogue their virtues ; I only hope that however nondescript the form of which I have written, I shall be able to give some idea of their lives and to show that it is possible for refugees from civilization to find in the Wanni, as John Still and others

besides myself have done, something which it is very hard to find elsewhere and about which it is worth while to write and even to read.'

John Still also drew a philosophy from the jungle and expressed it in fine prose. 'Visions of a regimented earth where birds only sing by request are to me so much more distasteful than the age-old struggle with the jungle tide that I rejoice in an outlook that seems to the commercial utilizer of applied science as horribly pessimistic. I do not think man will ever win final victory over the jungle; but rather that the battle will go on in the future as it has in the past with alternating victories on either side and with the tide of the jungle ever ready to rise and flow over civilization whenever it grows too proud to keep on learning, as Spain once grew; or when it gets tired of exerting will power, as we seem to be doing; or when it makes mistakes as the Sinhalese kings did when they pinned their prosperity to a vulnerable irrigation system.'

Like most one-track sportsmen, I thought of 'birds' only as game birds and my interest in this small category was limited largely to a study of the ways and means of shooting them. I could recognize virtually every edible species in Ceylon but knew nothing of the great world of non-sporting birds that inhabit this ornithologist's paradise. Three hundred and eighty-six different species of birds either live permanently in the Island or migrate to it from the mainland of Asia, and of this total, the quail, partridge, snipe, woodcock and jungle fowl make up but a minute fraction.

My introduction to the sport of bird-watching — and I found it requires far more skill to locate the nest of a Kentish plover than it does to flush and shoot its cousin the golden plover — took place in early June at the hamlet of Aragum Bay, down on the south-east coast of the Island. My teachers, Eric Wikramanayake, Minister of Justice of

the Dominion Government, and Major W. W. A. Phillips, a planter of many years' residence in Ceylon and author of numerous books on both birds and mammals, were patient men, and during the three days we spent in the area they not only showed me more than a hundred interesting birds but taught me something of their bird-watching techniques.

The first lesson revealed how ignorant I was. Near the Aragum Bay rest-house, which is situated on a sandy bluff only fifty yards from the sea, there are some coconut palms, and on the frond of one of these was perched what I took to be a crow, the most common bird in Ceylon. But I was wrong. This black and slightly longer version was a koel, a member of the cuckoo family. The lives of these birds, however, do depend on the crows. The male koel annoys the female crow until the latter leaves her nest in exasperation. The female koel then slips into the crow's vacant home and proceeds to lay her egg. Immediately after this she departs and Madam Crow, never realizing that her clutch has been increased by a single koel egg, rears the little stranger with the same love and affection that she gives her own brood.

Another bird, easily spotted from the rest-house, was a Ceylon sparrow which, I was impressed to hear, was named by my friend Dillon Ripley while he was stationed on the Island with the Office of Strategic Services during the late war. Apparently a duplicate of the Indian sparrow, the Ceylon sparrow has certain differences that were previously overlooked. Bill Phillips told me that Dillon also named the Ceylon long-tailed nightjar, the Ceylon yellow-browed bulbul and the Ceylon brown-capped babbler. So keen an ornithologist was Dillon — he is now professor of that science at Yale — that he was reported, no doubt erroneously, to have mixed his papers and sent in a long dispatch on the aforesaid bulbul to Intelligence headquarters in Washington, who, of course, regarded it as a fine piece of code work.

We had arrived in the heat of the day and, after a long swim in the creamy combers of the Bay of Bengal, had a curry lunch and a nap before sallying forth on our quest. We did take a gun but it was a ·410 collector's gun. The most important items of a bird-watcher's equipment are binoculars and all of us were armed with our favourite glasses. We also had the advantage of Bill's Land Rover, which was capable of rolling across the treacherous semi-swamps of the lagoon country and negotiating the even more hazardous sands of the dune tracts.

The best areas to study birds were the *kalapus*, great lagoon-like stretches of flat semi-swamp land originally formed by indentations of the sea but at that time of year blocked from salt water by sand-dunes. Fed by the rains, the water in them was still brackish but not too much so for the birds and the water-buffaloes that shared it. The first such lagoon we visited was Paladi Kalapu, a distance of some ten miles from the rest-house. Driving down on to the swamp, Bill stopped the Land Rover and we began to scan the ground through our glasses. Focusing on a strip of open sand, I noticed a little grey-brown bird with a whitish throat, apparently sitting on the ground. Bill told me that it was sitting on its nest and, sure enough, we found three stone-coloured eggs with black blotches in a shallow depression of the sand. In the meantime the mother pratincole, for such the bird was, kept circling around us and uttering high-pitched calls of distress. The pratincoles are a resident Ceylon bird and are not reported to leave the Island.

A little way beyond the pratincole's nest, I saw a tiny brownish-grey bird with a black belly, hopping along the ground in a pathetic attempt to make us believe that he had a broken wing. The brave little actor was a black-bellied finch lark and his nest was a beautifully lined little hollow beneath a clump of grass. There were two mottled, rock-coloured eggs.

Near the water were some tall reeds and hanging to some of them shoe-shaped nests, cleverly constructed of intricately woven slivers of reed. These were the homes of the striated weaver-birds. The entrance is at the foot of the nest and it was wonderful to see the little brown birds come zooming in and, without checking their speed, dive up into their nests. I found an old nest and discovered that there is a cup-shaped sac inside, in which the birds live. Tales that weaver-birds imprison fireflies in their nests, so that they may have a light to enter by, may be fanciful, but a bird smart enough to make as fine a hanging palace as a weaver might easily be tempted to light it up.

Near the nests of the striated weavers were similar nests hanging to trees. These were also beautifully woven of reeds but were shaped like a skittle and were the work of the baya weaver-bird. A lighter-coloured bird with more pronounced yellow head, the baya is easy to differentiate from his cousin. Both male weavers attract their mates by singing lustily while they are building their wonderful nests, and the females, like others of their sex, are mightily charmed by such substantial dwellings.

There was a dead tree near the bank of the Kalapu and high on its gaunt branches we spotted a crested serpent eagle, the great bird whose main diet is snakes. Several times while hunting snipe I have seen these eagles swoop and come up with a wriggling snake in their talons.

Soon after this, Bill spotted a white-shafted little tern and knew from the way it hopped along the ground that we were near its nest and that it hoped to draw us away. After hard looking, we found a shallow depression in the sand with three dull stone-coloured eggs. Farther out, on the line where the rippling water of the swamp lapped the bank, we saw a colony of whiskered terns, migrants from India, that return to the sub-continent to breed. These were young birds, not mature enough to breed, and accordingly having no strong desire to fly north.

It was a crystal-clear afternoon with high white fleecy clouds which set off the various colours of the birds to perfection. Particularly attractive against this background were the emerald-green common and chestnut-headed bee-eaters. Far out on the water floated a pinkish-white pelican and near him stalked a family of graceful egrets. Protected in Ceylon as they are in America, the four different types of egrets on the Island are plentiful. Over a shelf of open water, a sapphire-blue white-breasted kingfisher folded its wings and plunged like a dive-bomber toward its fish prey. A moment later it rose with an inch-long silver minnow in its bill.

The bravery of these little birds was heartening to see. Most of them, as I have reported, lay their eggs on open ground, over which droves of water-buffalo are constantly grazing. To prevent these vast quadrupeds from crushing their eggs, the mother birds have been known to fly up straight into their faces. We saw several buffaloes lying within a few feet of a nest with the mother still sitting defiantly on her eggs. We scared the buffaloes away and the little Kentish plover only left her nest when we were almost on top of her. Then, instead of flying, she dragged her wing along the ground in the best imitation of a wounded bird that we had the pleasure of witnessing.

Toward evening, we drove to Rotta Wewa, one of the ancient tanks which had been restored and was being used to irrigate a vast stretch of paddy land. The middle of the thousand-acre tank was covered with white lotus flowers and the stretches of open water reflected the copper and gold of the sunset. A painted stork rose majestically from the lotus beds and flapped gravely away, while a grey-headed fishing eagle eyed us from a near-by tree and followed suit. Flocks of whistling and cotton teal floated by, as did an Indian darter, looking like a snake with his long slender neck and partly submerged body.

Another tank which we visited was Lahugalla, a lovely

sheet of water in the heart of the jungle. The circuit bungalow keeper reported that a herd of elephants came there nightly and only a few weeks before our arrival a leopard had snatched his only dog. Walking along the bund, which was studded with sharp stones to discourage the elephants from promenading, we, or rather Bill, spotted a black bittern, a relatively rare bird. In the same tree I saw a flash of butter-yellow and was told it was a black-headed oriole, adorned by his flaming red mating bill. Out over the water a Ceylon kingfisher darted by with a flash of blue-green and chestnut, while farther down the tank, where a field of pink lotus lay, we saw a flock of *jacanas*, the graceful water pheasants, that, by virtue of their long-toed feet, can run over the water-lily leaves like the airiest of dancers. Farther out in the open water a single little grebe, smallest of the Ceylon water birds, sought its dinner by frequent dives. Known also as the dabchick, the little grebe resembles a tiny duck but seldom quite succeeds in rising clear of the water when it flies.

Near the circuit bungalow we saw a racquet-tailed drongo, a pair of ash doves, a bronze-wing pigeon (bound, as all pigeons always seem to be, on important immediate business) and a black-headed munia. About this time Bill heard a Tichell's flower-pecker, the smallest bird in Ceylon. For a long time we could not locate it but knew by its curious cry that it was in a tree just over us. Then it suddenly flew off and I saw a bee-like streak as it went. The tiny sunbird, which we noticed soon afterwards, was more accommodating and I had a chance to focus my glasses on its purple and gold plumage. We saw two of the heron family, the pond heron and the purple heron.

In the early hours of the morning we drove to Komari Kalapu, a huge lagoon some fifteen miles from the rest-house. Dotted with great outcroppings of gneiss, which looked like stranded whales, the swamp was the home of numerous cotton teal. These were engaged in their pre-

nuptial flights and the drakes were chasing the ducks. We saw six males hot on the tail feathers of a fleeing female. Eric discovered a painted snipe hiding in a gully. A female in full breeding plumage, she was obviously resting from her flirtations. Her morals are questionable. She lays a clutch of eggs, puts her poor husband on them to hatch and bring up the family, and runs off to find herself a new mate. This goes on till she gets tired of laying and running. Needless to say, the husbands are dull and unattractive little birds.

Drama is never absent from the world of birds. A great white-bellied sea-eagle attempted to swoop on some young stilts and immediately a flock of adult stilts rose to defend their young. Since the stilt is only a fraction of the size of the eagle and has no possible means of hurting it, their attack was the epitome of courage. Diving around the eagle from all sides, they so annoyed it that it finally flew off in disgust.

Soon after this, Bill saw what he thought might be a red-breasted Caspian plover, one of the rarest wanderers to the Island. Only once before — in 1950 — was one collected in Ceylon. Stalking it quietly, Bill fired and missed, but luckily the bird did not fly far and on the second try he bagged it nicely. On closer inspection he said there was no doubt it was a sand plover in breeding plumage, not the elusive Caspian traveller.

On one of the outcroppings we spotted an adjutant stork, a relatively rare member of the stork family. And then, as the sun fell behind the outline of a mountain called Westminster Abbey, we heard the raucous screams of the pied hornbill, a bird that might easily have emerged from a Walt Disney film. A great grotesque caricature of a bird, with a deep bill a foot long and possibly six inches deep, the hornbill is protected but is still shot and eaten by the locals. Unlike the male painted snipe, who has nothing to say about his mate's behaviour, the male hornbill incarcerates his wife in a hole in a tree. After she enters, the

opening is progressively closed until it is merely a slit through which he faithfully feeds her. Inside, she incubates her eggs, moults her tail and flight feathers and grows a new set.

On a big tree near the water, we saw a Rufus woodpecker, the daring bird that builds its nest in a hive of black ants. It is said, moreover, that even though these woodpeckers are fond of black ants, they never feed from the ants in whose papier-mâché home they have laid their eggs.

While birds may or may not recognize eggs, they certainly know their own nests, so we were mystified when we found a red-wattled lapwing sitting contentedly on a clutch of Kentish plover eggs. An hour later we returned to this nest and found the little Kentish plover mother back on the job. Undoubtedly the lapwing was a paid egg-sitter! Another bird we saw, that was not where it should have been, was a blue-tailed bee-eater: a migrant from India that should have left Ceylon for the north by the end of April at the latest, and here it was on June 1.

We had a hard time finding the green bee-eater's nest, but Bill finally located one on the side of the tank embankment. Instead of the conventional nest which I expected to see, I was shown a hole in the ground and told that the little couple burrow it out with their claws and beaks; a mining operation of skill, since they must dig deep enough so that pressure from the outside will not crush their shaft. While one works, the other stands guard.

Bill Phillips had received a letter from Professor Novick of Harvard asking him about Ceylon bats. The Professor said he was interested in the echo-location apparatus of bats and intended to travel widely in the Far East to study this. Accordingly, Bill shot a pouch-bearing sheath-tailed bat so that he could show the Professor one of the various types of Ceylon bats.

After a good dinner, while we sat on the porch in the

moonlight and watched the combers thunder in on the beach, I asked my learned friends about the so-called devil-bird. Both said they had never heard it, but Bill identified as eagle owls several specimens which were sent to him as devil-birds and which had been heard to have made a terrible cry a few seconds before they were shot. The cry of this bird is said to be so blood-curdling that the Ceylon villagers believe that it is the spirit of a woman who, suspected of infidelity by her husband, recognized the finger of her baby in a curry which her insanely jealous spouse had prepared for her. Shrieking 'Apoi mage lanaya ko?' ('Where is my child?'), she thrust her spoon into her hair and committed suicide. The Sinhalese words when cried resemble the notes of the devil-bird.

There are two schools of opinion on the devil-bird. As I have mentioned earlier, Dr. R. L. Spittel thinks that it is either a hawk eagle or a honey buzzard. The only solution to the mystery is, of course, for both parties to listen collectively to all these birds and then decide on which one the awful title of devil-bird should be bestowed.

From the devil-bird to vampire bats was a natural digression. There are only two species of vampire bats in Ceylon: the Ceylon vampire and the Malay vampire. Both of these species belong to the Oriental vampire family, which are not true vampires in that they do not normally suck the blood of their victim like the famous vampires of South and Central America. However, two friends of Bill spent the night in Deminiliya Galge cave some years ago and one of them woke in the morning to find himself covered with blood oozing from a number of little wounds. The trackers then told him that he had been bitten by bats. Furthermore, in the Kalutara district, the local villagers state that sometimes the vampire or *Kotican* nips them while they are asleep. These tales are particularly interesting in that the normal food of these bats is wall lizards, small birds and other little vertebrates.

I learned that, in addition to the 240 resident species and sub-species of Ceylon birds, there are some 146 more birds that visit the Island regularly or occasionally. Most of these visitors are winter migrants which remain from October to April. Unfortunately no ringing is done either by the Indian or Ceylonese wild-life authorities, so that it is hard to tell the home base of many of these travellers. The Russians, however, do a lot of bird-ringing, particularly of game birds such as ducks and geese, and since no red-ringed birds have been found in Ceylon, it is logical to assume that few find their way down here from the Caspian area.

Interest in bird-watching did not mean that I had given up the gun, and I believe that the pleasantest days that a sportsman can spend in Ceylon are those devoted to *kes watuwa*, the pintail snipe. This gallant little bird holds such a fascination for many hunters that they forsake other quarry and spend all their spare time plus thousands of cartridges in its pursuit. I am not a fanatic about snipe but I can certainly perceive its many charms, and in the following will describe a typical morning's sport.

My good friends, Dr. Chandra Gooneratne, the number-one shikar organizer of my Embassy, and Edward Fernando, an ornithologist and taxidermist, recently took me on a bright December morning to the little village of Kohlana, some twenty-six miles south along the coast from Colombo. There we picked up the brothers Bois and Podi Singho, Sinhalese guides with twenty years' experience in guiding hunters to the haunts of the wily *kes watuwa*.

The country around Kohlana is varied, with the green cups of paddy-fields nestling between coconut- and rubber-crowned hills. Everywhere there is water, for paddy must have it, and an intricate and ancient system of retaining tanks and canals feeds the fields. Such a terrain is extremely photogenic but is far from the easiest place to shoot over. Paddy grows in several feet of black and slimy

ooze and the banks between the various fields are often rotten. Boots furnish little protection, and the wisest plan is to wear shorts and either go barefoot or put on a pair of snugly-fitting shoes with rubber soles.

Winter in Ceylon is of course somewhat of a misnomer, but the temperatures from October through February, when the best snipe shooting can be had, are usually far from uncomfortable. The billowing white clouds of the monsoon partially obscure the sun and, even when it beats straight down, the thermometer seldom climbs above eighty. Clad in a khaki bush-jacket, a pith helmet and the aforesaid shorts, any enthusiast can face a morning on the paddy-fields without hesitation.

Before taking my readers down to the paddy-fields, a brief description of the quarry seems in order. There are three kinds of snipe in Ceylon : the jack snipe, the painted snipe and the pintail. The jack snipe is so rare that one can afford to forget it, but the painted snipe is often shot and, while it does not occur in anything like the numbers of the pintail, it should be recognized.

Unlike the pintail, which is an emigrant from India, the painted snipe is a permanent resident of Ceylon. Its bill is shorter than that of the pintail and its body is slightly smaller. The easiest way to recognize it is by its flight. The pintail jinks erratically through the air, but the painted snipe takes a straight and leisurely flight line when flushed and is much easier to hit.

The pintail is the bird responsible for ninety-nine per cent of the sport provided by the snipe family. They begin to arrive in Ceylon early in September and settle in vast numbers in their favourite haunts. These include the swamps and paddy-fields from sea-level to over 6,000 feet. Pintail seem to prefer a muddy stretch with a little water over it, as their main diet consists of tiny organisms which they suck out with their long bills.

In addition to Bois and Podi, we picked up a brace and

a half of stalwart village youths to retrieve the birds and assist us across the more difficult hazards of the course. Then, arranging ourselves in a line, we started to beat the first of a long series of paddy-fields. The snipe has one of the world's best camouflage suits and usually lies as close as a hen pheasant on her eggs. After a few volleys of fire, they grow shy and often offer very difficult long shots.

The first set of fields produced several dozen birds and our barrels grew too hot to touch with comfort. I had one double which particularly pleased me. I was balancing myself precariously on a little irrigation dyke dividing two paddy-fields, and was just about to fall into one or the other of these morasses when two snipe whirled up almost under my feet. I fired at one after the other as I fell sideways. The village boy grabbed me around the waist and prevented me from falling headlong into the paddy. He then, with a broad grin, retrieved two dead snipe.

By noon, the sun was directly overhead and the snipe-stick was heavy with birds. We decided to take a breather and repaired to one of the little islands of high ground where a grove of coconuts gave promise of a refreshing repast. The minute plantation of about two acres turned out to be the estate of one Sopi Nona, a charming old lady who supported her son-in-law and daughter as well as herself. She soon had a grandson shinning up a tree and, after chopping the ends open with a knife, presented us with a delicious drink of cool and mellow coconut milk. I consumed three coconut draughts and ate the meat of them as well. Mrs. Nona told me that she also had a few acres of paddy, and this source of rice, plus her coconut crop, kept her comfortably off. The coconut tree bears mature fruit every three months, so the owner gets four crops a year.

After the rest, we again invaded the fields and resumed our sport. In addition to snipe, there are several other

shotworthy birds in the paddy-fields: we frequently saw the cotton teal. These attractive little teal are indigenous to Ceylon, and along with the whistling teal breed and spend their lives on the Island. The cotton teal make a subdued cackling call which sounds very much like 'quacky'; they are therefore locally referred to as 'quacky ducks'.

One of the hazards of snipe shooting in Ceylon is the presence of 'snippets', or sandpipers. These little birds are about half the size of a snipe, and have little food value, but since they get up in the same manner as their larger cousins, they invite a good deal of lead, especially in fading light.

Everyone has his own ideas on the armament for snipe, but I prefer a light double twenty-bore gun with twenty-six-inch barrels. I use number eight or nine shot and make my gun-boy carry several hundred cartridges. There is nothing worse than running out of cartridges when the birds are flying and a fresh supply is many weary water miles away. Another useful forethought for snipe shooting is to have a snipe-stick made. This is a metal stick which allows the retrieving-boys to slip the heads of the snipe through a slot and so carry several dozen of them at a time.

Gun-boys and retrieving-boys must be cautioned not to run in front of the line in order to pick up a downed bird. They must wait and retrieve the bird as the line moves on to it. Snipe shooting is still a cheap sport and the shikar costs for three guns for the day were less than two U.S. dollars.

Chapter VII

THE DESPERATE DAYS

We sat in the garden of Queen's House in the fort of Colombo and talked of the old days. It was twilight and the temple trees were etched against the waning sunset. The hum of the city and the murmur of the surf on the sea-wall were muted by the foliage, and the quiet of evening lay over the lawns and flower-beds. There were five of us. A British officer of the old school, a Sinhalese aristocrat, a distinguished descendant of the Dutch Burghers, a well-known Ceylon Tamil whose ancestors had embraced the Catholic religion and had taken a Portuguese name, and myself. All of us were interested in the history of the fort and, as the whisky fell in our glasses, we mused on the people and events of yesterday.

In an adjoining garden was the great slab of granite on which Admiral de Almeida had carved the royal arms of Portugal. It was a good point of departure. Who were these men who splashed through the surf behind their Admiral in 1505 ?

A few were priests like St. Francis Xavier ; some were gentlemen seeking adventure ; but most were common soldiers and sailors. The records of the Holy Office in Goa tell much of the heroic part played by the saints of the Church, and *Os Lusiades*, the great epic poem by the poet Camoens, sings of the exploits of the captains, but there are few surviving accounts of the life of the rank and file. Among the few is that of Pyrard de Laval, a French seaman, who, having been shipwrecked on the Maldive Islands in 1601, finally worked his way to Goa, where, to

save himself from the Inquisition, he enlisted in the Portuguese army in India.

From him we learn that many of his comrades in arms were convicts and beggars. Forced into service by the press-gangs or bound over by the jails, the majority who sailed to the Indies in the high-pooped galleons had nothing to lose but their heads. Discipline on the ships, where most of the conscripts served as sailors or marines, was harsh, but during the monsoon from May to October they lived ashore like private citizens and then it was not such a bad life. Even though virtually all of them came from the lowest classes in Portugal, they all pretended to be gentlemen on their arrival in Goa or Colombo.

Groups banded together, bought a few suits of good clothes, engaged some slaves to wait and cook, and sallied forth in rotation. No wonder the natives of India and Ceylon at first thought all Europeans were rich. Little did they realize that Private de Soyza's satin pantaloons, scarlet sash and green brocaded coat were his only for the evening and that Corporal Fonseca would sport them the following night. 'Such is their brave appearance', said Pyrard, 'that you would think they were lords with incomes of 10,000 livres.' There were places where slaves could be hired for half a day for a copper, and, with a few of these to walk behind and a man to carry the big umbrella over him, the Portuguese soldier cut a dashing figure.

Women were not a problem. According to Pyrard, the Portuguese colonies in the Indies at that time were full of half-caste women and these Eurasians usually desired alliances with Europeans. As there were few Portuguese soldiers and an ever-expanding number of half-caste ladies, there was considerable competition among them for the favours of the warriors. The girls were prepared to feed them, clothe them and even supply them with pocket money. Pyrard notes, however, that most of these women had terrible tempers and did not hesitate to poison unfaithful lovers.

Morals among all classes of Portuguese society in those days were elastic. Even women of noble rank administered the drug datura to their husbands so that they could carry on affairs before the eyes of their spouses. Pyrard describes the effect of this drug in a memorable passage. 'An hour after being served it in their soup, the husbands become giddy and insensible, singing and laughing, for they lose all consciousness and judgment. Then do the wives make use of their time, admitting whom they will, and taking their pleasure in the presence of their husbands who are aware of nothing.'

Soft and vice-ridden as Portuguese society in the East became, the soldiers never lost their courage and displayed fanatic bravery in the defence of their *fortaleza.* In 1656, when the fortress of Colombo had been under siege by the Dutch for five months and the supply of provisions was almost exhausted, the Governor ordered the expulsion of 2,000 non-combatants. The Dutch, however, did not allow these poor people to pass their lines, so that all died of starvation or committed suicide below the walls. Against this macabre background R. H. Bassett, basing his story on actual events, tells the stirring tale of a typical Portuguese soldier, Manoel de Sousa.

Shanghaied from the slums of Oporto, de Sousa landed in Colombo as 'Senhor Manoel da Sousa da Villa Vicosa'. A brave and brutal soldier, he soon earned the title of 'Sousinha', or 'Little Lion', on account of his small size but great courage. He was promoted and given the title of 'Cavalheiro Fidalgo' for distinguished valour. Two years of desultory fighting against the Kandyan King's outposts provided Sousinha with enough loot to return to Colombo and set himself up as a man of property and affluence. His ease was short-lived, however, for soon after he returned to the capital and settled down to housekeeping with the prostitute Catherina, an old sweetheart whom he had befriended on the passage out, the Hollanders

appeared before the gates of the city and the grim siege began.

Even though starvation reduced the garrison to cannibalism, the Captain-General refused to surrender. But the position was finally made untenable by the mining of their bastions by the Dutch. Sousinha built a counter-gallery and manned it himself. It was in this stifling tunnel that Catherina told him one night that the bishop had at last persuaded the Portuguese Captain-General that further defence was futile. With his arm around the faithful Catherina, Sousinha fired his pistol into a powder-cask. 'A fitting funeral salute for two of Colombo's corrupt but heroic defenders.'

A vivid description of this siege appears in *A True and Exact Description of the Most Celebrated East India Coasts of Malabar and Cormorandel and also of the Isle of Ceylon*, by Philip Baldeus, Minister of the Word of God in Ceylon (Amsterdam, 1671). My copy of this work was translated from the High Dutch and printed by John Churchill at the Black Swan in Paternoster Row in 1703. Baldeus, with a magnanimity rare for his age, quotes the official Portuguese account of the siege and gives the defenders full marks for gallantry. Describing the terrible conditions in the city, Ribeiro, the Portuguese historian, said, 'during the whole siege of nearly seven months it did not rain and this caused such intense heat that it was not possible to walk through the streets even with shoes on; for these were covered with dead bodies, full of noxious flies and emitting a horrible stench'. All the elephants save one were eaten by the defenders, and this one was only spared because of his brave work in carrying timber to rebuild the defences.

The city surrendered on May 12 and 'at three in the afternoon', said Ribeiro, then a captain in the Portuguese army, 'we came out of the city, seventy-three very emaciated soldiers, all that remained there, including some with broken arms and minus a leg, and all looking like dead

people'. The flag of Portugal fluttered down from the ruins of the fort and the standard of the Netherlands was raised.

The Dutch were great builders and it was not long before Colombo became a Dutch city. Many of their fine old houses stand today and next to Queen's House, itself an old Dutch mansion, it was particularly easy to conjure up life in Colombo under the Hollanders. Robert Percival, Esq., of His Majesty's Nineteenth Regiment of Foot, in his *Account of the Island of Ceylon* describes a typical day of a well-to-do Dutch business man in his time: 'The chief trait of the Dutch character, which those in Ceylon retain, is their fondness for gin and tobacco; in other respects they adopt the customs and listless habits of the country. A Ceylonese Dutchman usually spends his time as follows: he rises at six, smokes a pipe and drinks a glass of gin, called a soupkie. At seven a dish of coffee is handed him by his slaves and his lounging position and pipe smoking are resumed for another while. He then goes to business or more frequently pays visits. If they have leisure to prolong the visit, they take off part of their dress, put on a little night cap, which they bring with them on purpose, and set themselves to talk and smoke till noon.'

If Percival was hard on the Dutchmen he was even harder on their women: 'The conversation of women, which has tended so much to humanize the world, forms very little of the Ceylonese Dutchman's entertainment'. Although the ladies formed part of the company they were ignored and were seldom addressed after the first formal salutations. Perhaps the current tendency for ladies in Ceylon to gather in one corner of a room while the men congregate in the other may have been initiated by the ungallant attitude of the early Burghers. It must be borne in mind, however, that Percival was an Englishman and a member of the army which only seven years previously had forced Van Angelbeek, the Dutch Governor of Colombo,

to surrender. The fort was given up without resistance and respect for the Dutch and their forces was not high.

Actually Van Angelbeek had a hard decision to make in February of 1796. He had received dispatches from Europe and knew that England was at war with France and that France had invaded Holland where the Republican army was popular with the masses of the people. The Prince of Orange, however, had fled to England and from there had sent a letter to Ceylon ordering the Governor to hand over the Dutch forts to the British. In addition to this dilemma, the commander of his Swiss regiment of mercenaries informed him that he had also received word to hand over his command to the British. Discouraged and confused, Van Angelbeek surrendered and died soon afterwards without returning to Holland.

Queen's House was the personal property of Van Angelbeek and after his death in 1799 was rented for a period to General Macdowall. In 1804 the building was purchased by the British Government, but the Honourable Frederick North, first British Governor of Ceylon, did not occupy it. He lived in the house of Pieter Sluyskens in the fort, and later at Hulftsdorp in the house of the Dutch Dissawa. Sir Thomas Maitland, who succeeded North and held office from 1805 to 1812, did occupy the building for a period and it was during his governorship that it was first called King's House. When the name was changed to Queen's House I do not know.

In 1831 Sir Robert Wilmot Horton wrote to the Secretary of State requesting funds to save the building which was then in a ruinous and dilapidated state. The Governor also stressed the point that Mount Lavinia, where he then lived, was seven miles from the city and consequently a lengthy commute by carriage or horse. Repairs at a cost of £700 were grudgingly approved by the Crown. In 1852, during the governorship of Sir G. W. Anderson, the house was virtually rebuilt at a cost of £7,000 and further

embellished during the reign of his successor, Sir Henry Ward. No major repairs have been effected since but, in deference to progress, a small elevator has been installed and several of His Excellency's private apartments are air-conditioned.

It is not so with the fort, which, except in name, has virtually ceased to exist. According to the Reverend James Cordiner, chaplain to the garrison of Colombo, who wrote a description of Ceylon in 1807, the circumference of the fort at that time was about a mile, and was defended by batteries and thirty pieces of heavy cannon. Today the outline of the old fort still encompasses about 250 acres, but the walls have been demolished although a remnant of the massive works still stands at the back of Queen's House and the cricket pitch in the Barracks Square is built on some of the old concrete ramparts. 1871 was the last year when official maps of Colombo showed the defences.

The origin of the name Colombo is not clear. Knox, writing in 1681, said of the city, 'On the West is the city of Colombo, so called from a tree the natives call *ambo* (which means mango fruit) growing in that place ; but this never has fruit but only leaves, which in their language is *cola* and thence they call the tree colamba ; which the Christians in honour of Columbus turned into Colombo'. Other authorities say that the name is derived from the Latin word *columba*, meaning dove. Spotted doves are common in the Island and the coat of arms which the Dutch heralds made for the city shows a mango tree with a dove in the centre.

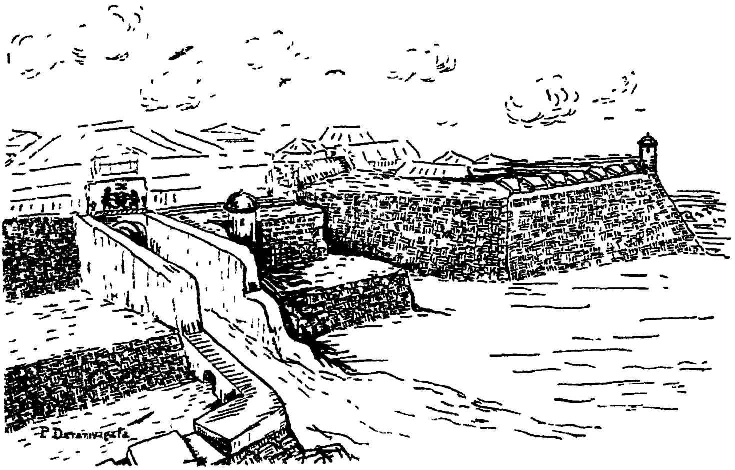
But perhaps speculation on the lives of her people and the origins of her name is a futile business. Today Colombo is a fine city of nearly half a million people, and who can say which conquerors' cultures or religions did the most to make her what she is ? In Victoria Park is a memorial to the 1914–18 War and the names carved on the stone are Sinhalese, Tamil, Moor, Portuguese, Dutch and British.

I believe, moreover, that the significance of this memorial is sometimes overlooked by nationalistically inclined minorities who tend to forget that their future is only as secure as the future of the nation as a whole.

From Colombo down the palm-shaded coast road to Galle is only seventy miles, but, in the larger concept of time, the towns are centuries apart. For a thousand years before Colombo existed as anything but a mud-walled fishing village, Galle was a thriving mart of trade. As I have said, some scholars believe it may have been the Tarshish of the Bible — the fabled port to which Solomon's merchant galleys sailed from Ezion-geber on the Red Sea to trade for gold, ivory, apes and peacocks with the proud kings of Lanka. Perhaps it was Kalah where, in the days of Haroun Al Raschid, the ships of the sultan met the junks of the Chinese emperor and returned with gems, silk and spices for the court of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

Such a prize could not fail to tempt the great trading nations of Europe, and in 1505 Portuguese galleons touched at Galle as well as Colombo and found Moorish captains loading cinnamon and elephants in the harbour. Elephants would certainly be a novelty in Lisbon, but cinnamon, in the days before refrigeration, was worth its weight in gold and the report of the Portuguese captain resulted in an expedition to Ceylon and the establishment of a trading post at Galle. From emporium to fort was a logical move in those uninhibited days, and by 1625 the fortress of Santa Cruz, whose walls encompassed the town, was completed.

Surrounded on three sides by water and presenting to the land approach frowning bastions some thirty feet high and almost as thick, the fort of Galle rises from the rocky coast like a medieval castle. Entering through a great arched gate, we found ourselves in a narrow winding street lined by old Dutch houses, a yellowing church and the



The fort of Galle

New Oriental Hotel, a hostelry only slightly modified since the days, three centuries ago, when it was used as an officers' barracks. Of the school of Raffles at Singapore and the late lamented Shepheard's of Cairo, the New Oriental has the character that comes from age and use — a dignity that cannot be superimposed on the gleaming and traditionless inns of more modern times. Our rooms were huge and gloomy but the old servant's morning bow was a thing of grace, and the keys with which we locked our rooms were of the vintage that Captain Kidd could well have used in his treasure chests.

After dinner, a new moon was sailing over the bastions and we walked down the empty and echoing streets to the water-gate over whose bronze-studded portals was carved the arms of the Dutch East India Company — the letters V.O.C., standing for Vereenigde Oost Indische Companie, and above them two lions rampant, a cock standing on a rock and the numerals 1688.

In such a place at such a time, it is easy to go even further back and conjure up the third watch of March 13, 1640, when the Dutch captain, Willem Jocobtz Coster,

having besieged the city for thirteen days, decided to carry it by direct attack and, just as dawn was breaking, hurled his forces at the bastions, scaled them and fought a long and bloody battle before the Portuguese captain, Lourenço Ferreiro de Brito, was forced to surrender. Since de Brito's garrison consisted of only some eighty Portuguese soldiers and sixty native lascoryns, his resistance was an heroic one. De Brito himself fell, gravely wounded, and his life was spared only through the intercession of his wife, who threw herself on his bleeding body. The Dutch captain was moved to pity and, when de Brito subsequently recovered, he was sent to Batavia with full honours of war.

So determined was Coster to take Galle that he 'filled the Asiatics with arrack mixed with gunpowder', and, as if that were not enough to make them brave, threatened with death all who fled. 'And this', said the Portuguese chronicler de Queiros, 'was the race with which God has chastened us.' Concern for the indigenous population was apparently not a major concern of some of the early Dutch Governors; we read with awe of Petrus Vuyst who clapped a plaster over one eye when he landed in Galle to show that he only needed one eye to rule so small and unimportant a country. He had a bad habit of ordering men's nails to be pulled out and the raw flesh then cauterized with hot sealing-wax. He was finally tried at Batavia and drawn and quartered.

Ghosts still flit about the old town and a pretty female spirit is said to haunt the palace of the Dutch Governors. This fine old house is now the home of H. L. Harbottle, the manager of the Galle branch of Walker Sons & Company. Mrs. Harbottle has taken a keen interest in the history of the house and told me that it was built by Thomas Van Rhee, Governor of the Dutch East India Company, in 1683. When Galle fell to the British in 1796, the palace was taken over by the British Governors and was known

as Queen's or King's House, depending on the contemporary sovereign. The palace was sold in 1872 by Governor W. H. Gregory, an act for which he was severely reprimanded by the Colonial Office. Mrs. Harbottle has a photostat of his reply to the Lords of the Colonial Office in which he justifies himself by stating, flatly, that Galle was a dying town. He was dead right, for three years later the breakwater was completed at Colombo, and Galle immediately ceased to be the port of entry for Ceylon.

The Dutch Church is a finely proportioned building. Begun in 1752 and completed ten years later, it has a simplicity of design that is rare in the generally heavy architecture of the period. The ceiling was originally painted cerulean blue and studded with stars. Underneath the main floor lies a great vault where the rich and powerful are buried. As in the church at Jaffna, final rest was regulated by fees: the highest being paid for space inside this vault and the lowest for a berth in the graveyard outside the fort. The baptismal register has been kept without interruption since 1678.

To my mind, however, the most thought-provoking sight in the old church is a curious shield hung on the wall. Purporting to be the trophy of a Dutch Governor, the shield is hung with articles of his personal equipment. There is a shirt, a pair of spurs, a pair of mailed gauntlets and a sword. But these grim accoutrements of war are all tiny. A boy of ten could not have worn the shirt nor pulled on the gauntlets. Was there once a midget Governor of Galle; some fierce little man who ruled the land with the child's sword in his hand?

The harbour of Galle is beautiful. A hundred years ago, Sir Emerson Tennent said of it, 'The sea, blue as any sapphire, breaks on the fortified rocks that form its entrance. The headlands are bright with verdure and the yellow sand is shaded by palm trees that incline their heads toward the sea. The shore is gemmed with flowers and the hills behind

are draped with perennial green. Far in the distance rises the zone of purple hills above which towers the sacred mountain of Adam's Peak with its summit enveloped in clouds.'

But the harbour is almost always empty. The master attendant, or port officer and pilot combined, has little to do. One, sometimes two, freighters each month risk the heavy surf of the anchorage, but most of his duty lies with the high-riding buggalows from India or raking schooners from the Maldives. He lives in a charming old-world house built on the bastion known as 'Ackers Sloot' after the birthplace of our friend Coster who kicked out the Portuguese. Engraved on the wall over the entrance is the cock of the Company and the date 1759.

The hinterland of coconuts, cinnamon, tea, rubber and citronella which Galle used to serve is still a rich producing area and, if sufficient money were spent on the harbour, there is no doubt that Galle would wake from its long sleep and become a bustling port once again. At this juncture, however, the chances of sparking such a programme do not look good. Colombo is now one of the busiest ports in the whole Far East and the complex of companies which handle this trade are not likely to alter the pattern to include Galle.

We dined with Manders, the Government Agent of the Southern Province, whose capital is Galle. An able administrator, with twenty-seven years' experience in the Civil Service, Manders is the last British Government Agent left in Ceylon. He takes a great interest in his work and told me many interesting things about the province and its people. His wife is equally adjusted to life in Galle and told us she was delighted with the old rambling Government bungalow, even though we could see it leaks and is innocent of running water. The view is one of the finest in Ceylon and the breezes always blow through the ample rooms.

Over the table hangs a vast punkah which is pulled slowly backward and forward by a servant to keep the air moving during meals. It was the first I had seen since my days in India twenty years ago, and a more Kiplingesque period piece it would be hard to find east of Suez.

Many of the Sinhalese of the Galle area are of the Chalia or cinnamon-peeler caste. Originally from the coast of India, they migrated to Ceylon in the thirteenth century and under the Portuguese became experts in working cinnamon. The Kings of Cotta later regularized their caste and assigned certain villages for them to live in.

In the fort itself the predominant race is Moorish. There live the descendants of the Arabian traders who came to Ceylon so long ago that the dates of their advent are lost in history. They have remained loyal to the Prophet, however, and one of the best-kept places of worship in the fort area is the mosque. Their women are still in purdah and a common sight in the narrow twisted streets is the purdah cart, a little pony- or bullock-drawn carriage, with curtains on all sides to hide the ladies from prying eyes.

The European contingent consists of only a score of families, mainly associated with the trading firms. Their focal point is the Galle Club, a charming, high-domed room in the old Dutch storehouse. On the walls are fading portraits of long dead British Kings and Queens. There are two good billiard tables, a unique bowling alley which runs between the billiard tables, and a bar. The Club's record books go back more than a hundred years. We joined.

Even though Galle is perhaps the most Dutch of the towns of Ceylon, there are few Burghers left in the area ; essentially professional men, they have mostly moved to Colombo.

Politically, the Galle district is apt to vote left and there is a large Communist vote in some of the more

depressed of the fishing villages along the coast. These fisher folk have a hard time as it is possible to fish only during one of the two monsoons, and when there is no fishing the villagers have to try to eke out a precarious existence by making coir rope and hoping for jobs on the road.

The major industry of the Galle area, however, is not cinnamon nor fish but coconuts. The tall graceful trees are everywhere; even the tiny islands of the bay hold a half-dozen swaying palms. And the coconut is beyond question the most valuable tree in Ceylon. Its wood timbers the houses of the peasants. Its plaited fronds, known as cadjuns, serve as mats, roofs and fences. Coir rope is made from the husks, and from the rich meat is pressed oil, the dried meat being called *copra.* The milk of the nut is sweet and pure, and from the juice of the flowers is concocted the arrack, which, even without the addition of Dutch gunpowder, has a formidable wallop.

Coconuts are so much a part of the coastal peasant's life that he believes that the palms would pine away if they did not hear the voices of people. In Tennent's time there was a legal case involving a claim for $\frac{1}{2520}$ part of an estate consisting of ten coconut palms.

I have always been interested in old coins, old books and old words and learned that semantics play a part in the claims of the scholars that Galle was indeed the Tarshish of the Bible. They point out that there is more than a casual similarity between some of the Tamil words of today and the ancient Hebrew. Peacocks were a prized and luxurious export of Ceylon and the Hebrew word for them was *tukeyim.* The modern Tamil word *tokei* is pronounced in almost exactly the same way. I cite only one example but there are many.

Coins of the ancient world abound in Galle. A ragged boy offered me copper coins of Rome, and in the museum of Colombo are the gold and silver tokens of Greece and

Egypt that found their way to Galle and were buried there centuries ago.

Time does not press in Galle and a long morning swim in sheltered Closenberg Bay is highly recommended. The water is sparkling, the white clouds float in stately fleets across a blue sky, and the palm trees on Gibbet Island hang their heads toward the sea. In the days of the Portuguese, hangings took place on this island and the public was ordered to drape itself along the shores of the bay and observe the fulfilment of justice. On the headland above the bay is Closenberg House, the 110-year-old mansion that was built by Captain Bailey, the agent of the P. & O. line, in the days when the port was thronged and the factor of a great shipping line was a power in the land. Today the house belongs to the Abeywardene family, who use it for week-ends. Among its charms are goldfish tanks built in coral and an aviary.

On a bright Sunday noon when the sun was baking the white streets, we lunched in the cool dining-room of Dr. and Mrs. Simeon Fernando, the Public Health Officer of the Southern Province. Mrs. Fernando gave us curried rice wrapped in banana leaves ; the best I have ever eaten. Also present was Judge Roberts, a distinguished elder statesman of Galle who carried his seventy-three years as nonchalantly as most men do their fifty. A native of the Barbados, he spent all of his mature life in Ceylon and is a mine of contemporary history.

Strangely, no book has yet been written on Galle, and existing information is both difficult to find and sketchy. Among the few records of the city under the Dutch rule is the report of the historian Valentyn, who gives a plan and description of the fort of Galle in 1663, twenty-three years after the Dutch took it from the Portuguese. The fort was surrounded by a moat fully eighteen feet broad and, on the land approach, was defended by three great bastions — those of the Sun, Moon and Stars. The moat has dried

up with the passing years but the bastions stand as solid as ever.

When the fort fell in 1796, the English Captain Macquarie, of H.M. 77th Regiment, commanding at Galle, wrote to Colonel James Steuart, commanding the British forces in Ceylon, that the fort was in good shape but most of the cannon, which incidentally were surrendered by the Dutch commander, Mr. Fretz, without a shot being fired, were too old to risk proving.

In 1888 the British abandoned the fort of Galle and the gallant old defences were finally left to weather in the sun and the wind.

Chapter VIII

EAST COAST STRONGHOLDS

TRINCOMALEE, the naval station on the north-eastern coast of Ceylon, means different things to different people. To the admirals of the free world, the harbour stands for control of the warm seas from the Persian Gulf to the Indies; to the devout Tamil, its significance lies in the towering cliffs of Swami Rock, a place of Hindu worship and pilgrimage since the dim beginnings of history; and to a third specialized group, the members of the Sea Anglers Club, it is the point of departure for adventures with rod and reel.

Such attractions could not fail to persuade us to make the 160-mile journey from Colombo, and the beginning of the long Labour Day week-end found me with my wife and daughters Phillippa and Rene, and our friend Rohini de Mel, comfortably ensconced in the Royal Navy's pleasant hostelry, the Welcombe Hotel, overlooking the sparkling expanse of the Inner Harbour.

Surrounded by jungle-clad hills whose deep green stands out vividly against the sapphire blue of the water, the harbour is certainly one of the most beautiful in the East. But the vast anchorage was virtually empty. A small destroyer, lying along one of the wharves, was the only sign that Britain still rules the waves, and perhaps, in the days of atomic air power, this is all the naval power necessary. Certainly, if war comes, no thoughtful admiral will now allow his battle fleet to be caught like sitting ducks in any harbour.

Dominating the Bay of Bengal as well as the coasts of India, Trincomalee has always been considered the key to mastery of the sub-continent. K. M. Pannikar, the Indian historian, in his study of sea power, *India and the Indian Ocean*, points out that control of this vital harbour gave the British control of the Indian Ocean and enabled them to defeat the French in the war for the conquest of India. The fall of Trincomalee, to the French Admiral Pierre de Suffren in 1782, might well have established French power in India, but, two years later, the politicians in Paris gave Trincomalee to the Dutch East India Company.

Despite its obvious importance, Trincomalee has never been strongly defended. A brief review of its history reveals that in 1620 a Danish expeditionary force landed and laid the foundations of a fort on a point of land from which cannon could command the approaches to the inner harbour. The Danes were expelled by the Portuguese before the fort was defendable, and the works were completed four years later by the great Portuguese general, de Sa. The three bastions and ten iron cannon constituted an entirely inadequate defence and the fort fell easily to the Dutch in 1639. The Hollanders did considerable work on the fort and by 1676 had raised an imposing series of battlements. These proved no more efficient than their prototypes, however, and a hundred years later, in 1784, the fort fell after a token resistance to the British under Colonel Steuart. With the surrender of the Dutch, Trincomalee passed finally to Britain, and Fort Frederick and the dockyards have remained under British control ever since.

Even Britain, certainly the most sea-power-minded nation of modern times, made little effort to strengthen the defences of the harbour. Lieutenant de Butts, writing of Fort Frederick in 1841, said, 'The frowning heights, crowned with redoubts and bristling with artillery, impress

the spectator with an idea of their military strength, if not of their impregnability; which, however, a closer inspection speedily and completely removes'. And Sir Emerson Tennent, the eminent historian of Ceylon, wrote in 1850 that 'the condition of neglect and insecurity which Trincomalee exhibits at the present day is painfully at variance with the terms of exultation with which its capture was originally announced to the nation'.

Today Trincomalee is the headquarters of the East Indies Station and flies the flag of Vice-Admiral C. F. W. Norris. A lucky officer, he is the only admiral in the British Navy who is allowed to take his wife along with him while cruising in Her Majesty's ships. We lunched with Admiral and Mrs. Norris at Admiralty House, a fine old Dutch pile that has housed the commanders of the station since Sir Samuel Hood took up his residence there in 1812. The House was acquired by the Admiralty in 1810, but there does not seem to be any record of its history before that date; among its charms is a framed collection of early Portuguese maps.

Admiral Norris's command entails a lot of blue water. It stretches from the Persian Gulf to Burma and from Pakistan to Mombasa on the coast of Africa. Mauritius, the Maldives and other islands of the Indian Ocean are also his concern. The command has grown since the days when Commodore Curtis Barnett commanded the station with a brace of frigates in 1744. The Admiral spends about half of his time cruising and usually flies his flag in the cruiser *Newfoundland.*

Long before Fort Frederick came into being, the rocky headland where it was built was a place of worship. Now known as Swami Rock, the 400-foot-high cliffs were famous throughout the East as a place of pilgrimage and, prior to the Portuguese occupation, noble temples adorned them. The Portuguese are reported to have pulled down the temple of 1,000 columns to build their original fort in 1622.

The origin of Swami Rock is lost in the mists of history but the Tamil legend gives a charming explanation of it. It seems that one of the kings of the Deccan was told by an oracle that the only way he could avert catastrophe was to put his infant daughter in an ark and set her afloat in the sea. The child's sandalwood bark was wafted by gentle breezes to Ceylon and touched shore just south of Trincomalee at a place still called Pannoa, or 'smiling infant'. The baby was immediately adopted by the local king, and after his death succeeded to his domains. In the meantime a Hindu Prince, having heard that the rock of Trincomalee was a holy fragment of the golden mountain of Meru, hurled to its present site by the gods, repaired to Ceylon and started to build a temple on the rock in honour of Siva. The Princess sent an army to expel him but changed her mind and married him. Later the Princess died and the King, retiring to the rock, shut himself up in a pagoda where he was subsequently found transformed into a golden lotus on the altar of Siva.

We were met by a callow young man wearing a pair of Hollywood-styled sun-glasses, who informed me that the temple needed donations. Removing our shoes, we followed him to a small white temple where the Tamil gods were arranged in a flower-garlanded group. The statues, buried at the time of the Portuguese and only recently excavated from a cave on the beach, are ancient and beautifully carved. There is a fine figure of Siva, said to be over a thousand years old, and an ancient likeness of his wife, Parvathi, and his elder son Ganesh, the elephant god with the wisdom of a man and the strength of an elephant.

The place where the ancient ceremonies took place and still take place today is a narrow shelf of rock overhanging a sheer drop to the turquoise sea below. It was here that Major Forbes, of the 78th Highlanders, writing more than a hundred years ago, said he saw 'the priest standing a few minutes before sunset on the giddy height of the farthest

rock that rises over the dark and fathomless ocean, and after dropping some rice into the sea, bowed his head with great reverence toward a chasm in the rock believed to be the residence of the spirit'.

Near the rock of the ceremonies is a pillar inscribed with the name of a Dutch girl, Francina Van Beede, who is thought to have thrown herself over the cliff as her faithless lover sailed past it on his way to Holland in 1689. This column is said to be the only remaining pillar of the temple of a thousand pillars.

Fort Frederick has undergone many changes but time has dealt gently with the old walls and one still enters through the great gate over which is carved the date 1676. Today's barracks are cool and roomy affairs, but it was not so many years ago that garrison duty at Trincomalee was an extremely hazardous experience. Major Forbes states in his excellent history of the period, *Eleven Years in Ceylon*, that in 1832 cholera carried off one-tenth of the complement. Malaria was also a notable killer in those days and Lieutenant de Butts, writing about the same period, attributed the losses from this scourge to the stupidity of the engineers who built the barracks in high places. He said, 'In India the summits of hills are proverbially unhealthy, as they get the benefit of the malaria rising from the low country around them, which continues to envelop them long after the valleys are freed from its presence. This fact appears to have escaped the attention of the authorities who sanctioned the building of the barracks on the hills within Fort Frederick.' Cholera and malaria are now rarer than hens' teeth in Trincomalee but last year there was poliomyelitis.

Trincomalee, the town, is a sprawling provincial capital of about 30,000 souls, whose economy depends almost entirely on the hiring capacity of the naval dockyards. A vast complex of buildings, dumping areas and roads, whose maintenance alone requires a working force of about 6,000

Ceylonese in addition to 300 Europeans, the dockyard is a mute testimony to the insatiable demands of modern defence. The maintenance gangs wage a constant battle with the ever-encroaching jungle; I saw a group of monkeys discussing the situation from the tin roof of a huge corrugated-iron shed.

The jungles and tanks near Trincomalee have always offered good sporting opportunities for the officers and men of the garrisons. Major Forbes wrote that, while he was travelling from Kandy to Trincomalee in 1833 — a matter of several weeks in those days — he came upon a young officer in a great state of elation over having killed a buffalo. He was somewhat disturbed, however, over the actions of one of the natives who appeared to resent his sport, and inquired of Forbes if the locals were superstitious about buffaloes. Questioning the native, Forbes soon established that he had every reason to be perturbed, for the buffalo was one of his team of tame ploughing animals.

Even today the jungle presses close on Trincomalee and I learned that elephants had recently pushed over some posts that had been erected around the perimeter of one of the storage areas. Couples idling along Lovers' Walk, a popular strolling lane, have also reported bears — certainly not the type of hugging that they wanted.

One evening we drove out to Adamkulam tank, one of the vast man-made irrigation lakes, and leaving the car, wandered along the bund. Wanderoo monkeys, their quizzical black faces framed by white whiskers, watched us gravely from the rocks and then swung off into the towering jungle banyans. A herd of water-buffalo, scenting us from their semi-immersion in the centre of the lake, rose out of the water and thundered off across the plain. As the sun sank lower in the west, flights of birds crossed the skies and some settled into the trees near the tank for their night's rest. Through my field-glasses I saw an axis

doe and her fawn grazing from the edge of the jungle and, farther away still, the brown blur of what may have been a sambhur stag.

The tropical waters of the Bay of Bengal are reported to swarm with fish; marlin, swordfish, tuna and tiger shark have all been caught a few miles offshore, while farther in along the coast kingfish, barracuda, horse mackerel, red mullet, rock cod, coduwa and seer can be taken. In the old days the harbour itself teemed with fish, but of late years the vicious practice of dynamiting has shown an alarming increase. The water police are few and far between and those who have tried to do their duty have frequently been threatened with dynamite themselves. The real root of the problem, however, rests with the law, under which the fines imposed are often of smaller amounts than the value of the fish taken by this illegal means.

The best fishing is found up or down the coast, and to meet the demand for power boats to reach these grounds, the Sea Anglers Club was formed some thirty years ago. Today the Club has more than three hundred members, maintains living accommodation, serves meals and runs three power launches.

I booked the *Tuna*, a thirty-six-foot launch, for the day and we set out in the clear dawn for a trip down the coast. The skipper, a young Ceylonese named Rasiah, handled the boat well and told me he had served eight years in the Royal Navy. Leaving China Bay, we ran into Koddiyar Bay, which comprises the outer harbour, and then, turning south, passed Norway Island and Foul Point Light and cruised along the palm-fringed coast toward Batticaloa.

We were using two rods: a club rod with sixty-pound line and a silver spoon, and my own light glass 'Gulf Stream' equipped with a Penn reel, twenty-five-pound line and a feather lure.

Near Hemming Rocks, whale-shaped boulders that rise from the sea some ten miles down the coast from the

harbour, I noticed a dark shape rushing through the clear white water and thought for a moment that we were in for some real sport. With a surge, however, the fish broke water and proved to be the headmaster of a school of dolphins, which played around us for the next five minutes. Completely without fear, these attractive creatures came so close to the launch that we could almost touch them. Soon after they left us, Rohini, who was fishing with my light rod, hooked a five-pound kingfish which she lost just as the boatman was about to gaff it. Later we swam, lunched and trolled home, arriving without a fish but richer by a fine day on the ocean.

As we turned into the outer harbour, I kept wondering why it was that Trincomalee, with such a great natural advantage, was not chosen as the capital of Ceylon in place of Colombo. Then I remembered that Philip Baldeus said in his *True and Exact Description of the Isle of Ceylon* that Colombo's importance was due entirely to cinnamon: 'that precious spice was the Helen or bride of conquest for which we disputed the entire production thereof for so many years with the Portuguese', and cinnamon grew only near to Colombo.

'The snake,' said the old man, 'will always protect me even while I sleep.' And I wondered what snake he meant until I noticed the outline of a *naga* tattooed in purple ink on the mahogany shaft of his forearm. 'It cost me five rupees,' he said, 'and also brings me luck fishing.'

We were sitting, the old man and his grandson, Ronnie Grenier and I, on a ridge of sand ten feet from where the incoming tide lapped the beach. It was just after dawn and a pearl-grey haze lay over the lagoon of Batticaloa. Before us, the tide murmured over the bar and stirred the hulls of anchored buggalows which could not cross until they had lightered in part of their cargo. Ancient lateen-rigged sailing ships from India, the buggalows were laden

with tiles, cement and timber. There were also graceful log canoes equipped with outriggers, sailing home from the night's fishing.

The old man showed me his *barudala*, a beautifully woven, gossamer-thin throwing net with which he caught sprats. He said the net took him a year and a half to make and I could well believe it. He showed me how he whirled it around his head and then let it fall, in a great circle in the sea, drawn downwards by the ring of lead sinkers attached to the leading edge. The boy, his grandson, watched him with admiration. He was a handsome youth of about ten, with pierced ears and little glass earrings in the lobes. His father had died and the old man looked after him. He carried the old man's basket in which were kept the sprats.

We talked of fish and men who fish. I learned that the

Fishing for sprats with a barudala

old man's name was Mavana Kolondavel and that he had followed the sea for fifty-seven years. Naked except for a white gee-string and a white cotton turban, he was thin and knotted as befitted a man who had worked hard all that time. He was a Tamil, and according to his lights, a religious man. Not only did he show his spirituality by having the naga tattooed on his arm but he visited the local Hindu temples often and burned camphor to the gods. He had never been to Kataragama but expected to hear the call one of these days and make the pilgrimage.

The purpose of my trip to Batticaloa was to lecture on American foreign policy at St. Michael's College and incidentally to fish for *parava*, the premier game fish of the estuaries. Although the parava, known to us as the amberjack, is not strictly an estuary fish as it is also found out at sea, it provides more thrills on rod and reel than any other marine fish with the possible exception of the bonefish, which is rarely seen in Ceylon waters. Ronnie describes the parava as 'the one fish that is not afraid to die'.

There are eighteen varieties of paravas, but king of them all is the *goli parava*, the *karunkani* of the Tamils, a vividly coloured fish ranging from greenish blue on the back to saffron yellow over the rest of the body. Parava average ten pounds, but Peter Jayawardana, Game Ranger of Okanda, caught a seventy-five-pounder at Hallava Lagoon on surf-casting tackle. The fish took him an hour and a half and led him a chase up and down the shore before he brought it to gaff.

'The charge of the *goli*,' said Ronnie, 'is like a shot from a gun ; swift, ruthless, unerring.' Such a build-up would stir the blood of any angler, and despite the fact that the *kachchan*, the fierce dry wind of the south-west monsoon, was bending the palm trees and tipping the blue-green waters of the bay with foam, we had walked to the bar in the dawn and only ceased casting when convinced that the parava were not striking.

The next best thing to catching fish is hearing about them, and from Ronnie and the old man I learned something of the fish of the Ceylon estuaries and the men who wring a meagre living from catching them. Explaining that estuary fishing depends on the tides, my mentors said that fish feed best on the turn — that is, when it stops flowing in, or at the pause before the ebb. Bane of the Ceylon anglers is the aforesaid *kachchan* which pours its rain-laden torrents on the tea-covered hills of the interior and arrives on the eastern coast as a dry withering gale that literally drives the fish out of the lagoons and into the sea. June and July are the worst months for sea fishing in Ceylon, and it was bad luck that we visited Batticaloa late in July of 1955.

Most commercial fishing in Ceylon is done with nets, and Ronnie, who made a study of these nets, described them to me. The largest net, called the *ma-dal*, is a shore seine. I have often seen these nets being hauled in by the entire population of villages on the coast below Colombo. Next in size and importance is the *modha-dala*, constructed of thick twine made from hemp almost all of which comes from Kochchikadde, near Negombo. This twine is very strong and holds the big fish such as the *parava*, *kattava*, *silava*, *thorelli*, *kattavalla* and has been known to hold shark. Ronnie tells a hair-raising tale of the inadvertent netting of a monster crocodile by the fishermen of the Kalu Ganga. Crocodiles of the estuaries, unlike those of the fresh-water rivers and tanks, are often man-eaters, and bathing in many of the southern rivers is done inside wooden stockades.

There are also very fine nets that catch the smallest fish that swim; these should be made illegal as they destroy the fry. The fishermen have been told to refrain from using such nets, but a net takes a long time to make and a long time to wear out. Even more wasteful than the fine nets is the use of dynamite. Cheap to buy and lethal to all

marine life within a wide area, dynamite has already resulted in a marked reduction in the fish population of many areas.

The penalty for dynamiting is inadequate and it is hard to get convictions. Under existing laws, the criminal must be caught with the fish and it must be proved, beyond reasonable doubt, that the fish were killed by the explosive. As the culprits operate at night and out at sea where they can easily jettison both the illegal catch and the dynamite, they are difficult to convict even when the noise of the explosion is heard and the dead fish are seen drifting in the water.

Studying fish can be just as fascinating a sport as catching them, so it was decided to spend the following day at Panichankerni, a shallow bay formed by two coral promontories, some thirty-six miles north of Batticaloa. On the ocean floor of the bay grow lavender, blue, pink and pale-yellow coral jungles through whose tinted mazes flit school after school of strange and wonderful fish. There were butter-yellow fish with almond eyes, pencil-thin fish with horizontal blue and white stripes, green fish with blood-red eyes, polka-dotted fish and shadowy purple fish, with big mouths and sleepy expressions.

About mid-way between the two promontories is an attractive whitewashed bungalow, the property of E. E. Denise, a retired civil servant and an old friend of Ronnie, who kindly offered hospitality. Using his bungalow as a base, we spent a long lazy day swimming over the reef and gazing down through snorkel-equipped goggles, into the crystal-clear water. When we tired of swimming, we lay on the white sand or fished for *kossa*, the brown and yellow grouper, or *boralwa*, the thick-lip. Neither of these fish are considered first-class sea food, but when deliciously curried by our host made a fine meal.

After lunch we dozed and read old books on Batticaloa and its history. The district is a very ancient one and is mentioned in the great Indian epic poem, the *Ramayana.*

It seems that Hanuman, the monkey-god, burnt his tail during the burning of some patnas by Prince Rama who was intent on firing the Island. Hanuman quenched his tail by dipping it in a pool at Amirtakala, and to this day the event is celebrated there in early August.

But the best-known legend of Batticaloa has been built up round a fish rather than a god. Who in Ceylon has not heard of the famous singing fish of Batticaloa lagoon ? On still nights, especially during the full of the moon, a distinct sound can be heard in the placid waters. Resembling the hum of a telephone wire, which rises and falls in volume, the 'music' is hardly symphonic but is a most interesting phenomenon. Ronnie, in his excellent book, *Tales of Fish and People of the Ceylon Estuaries*, says that the sounds are made by the *kaththalaya*, or singing bass, and that he has heard these fish singing at Elephant Pass, far in the north of Ceylon, as well as in the lagoon of Batticaloa. Ronnie thinks little of this bass as a sporting and eating fish and says its only virtue is its ability to sing.

Not everyone agrees with Ronnie. Sir Emerson Tennent, the Island's most quoted historian, noted that in 1826 a Dr. Grant claimed that the sounds came from little molluscs. In 1911 Dr. Pearson spent some time in Batticaloa and advanced the theory that the sounds came from fish, but what kind of fish he did not say. Ronnie, however, has undoubtedly solved the riddle, as he says the kaththalaya makes the same sound out of water as it does while swimming in the depths.

Batticaloa first came into European history when it was visited by the Dutch Admiral Spilbergen in 1602. Entering the river on May 29, the Admiral dispatched a messenger with his compliments to King Darma Jangadara. Later the King invited the Admiral to call and had him met at the shore with five elephants, 'which noble animals had been taught to testify their respect for the Dutch by kneeling'. In 1639 a combined force of Dutch and Sinhalese soldiers

attacked the Portuguese fort at Batticaloa, and, although the garrison numbered only forty men, it held out gallantly for two days and would have fought longer if the water source had not been interdicted. So furious was the Sinhalese King, Rajasinha, at the help given the garrison by the people of Batticaloa that he had fifty of them impaled on stakes and sold the remainder into slavery.

In the late eighteenth century the Batticaloa district was occupied by the British and it was from the old town that the famous Captain Johnson made his epic march to Kandy. A fascinating account of the march is recorded in Johnson's own book, *Narrative of the Operations of a Detachment, in an Expedition to Kandy in the Island of Ceylon in the year 1804, with Some Observations on the Previous Campaign and the Kandyan Warfare.* Writing of the barbaric customs of the Kandyan soldiers in regard to prisoners, Johnson said, 'The Kandyans will even decapitate their own countrymen when they are killed in action and carry the heads to their chiefs, telling them that these heads belong to the enemy, in order to obtain a reward and distinction'.

The British soldiers stationed at Batticaloa in the old days enjoyed their sport, and Colour Sergeant Calladine of the old 19th Foot, now the Green Howards, wrote in his diary that during the time 'we lay at Batticaloa [1803] we had several alligators caught, but one in particular measured 24 feet and 6 inches ; its head was a yard and one inch and its body was completely a substance of scale, not to be entered by a musket ball'.

Today the old fort of Batticaloa houses Government offices and, although some Dutch houses can still be seen on the esplanade along the lagoon, the town has become a busy provincial capital. Only fishing is unchanged, and the canoes that work out across the bar are virtually identical with those used hundreds of years ago.

Chapter IX

RUHUNA AND BAGARA

BROWNIE was an old Anglo-Indian nanny who took wonderful care of my seven-year-old daughter Mary. Neither Brownie nor Mary had ever been in the jungle before when we took them, in July of 1955, to the Ruhuna National Park, the wild life reservation in south-eastern Ceylon. The Government bungalow, where we all stayed, was a primitive affair and the only sanitary facility was a doorless shed located on the edge of the jungle about twenty-five yards behind the main house. Soon after we arrived and were having lunch, Brownie came rushing into the dining-room and announced breathlessly, 'Excuse me, but I just went to the bathroom and an elephant is there.' Jumping up, we all raced down to the outhouse and found a half-grown female elephant gravely regarding us from the bushes. She was entirely friendly and stood patiently while we photographed her.

While this auspicious beginning came as a surprise to Brownie and the rest of us, it was not unexpected by Rajapakse, the old Sinhalese bungalow-keeper. He had promised Mary and Brownie that they would see an elephant soon after their arrival. Such a promise is not made idly in wild Ceylon. Behind it exists a whole set of mystic relationships based largely on mutual respect and tolerance. 'I am all alone here,' said Rajapakse, 'and I am sixty years old and defenceless. If I did not have the good will of the god, Kataragama, who controls the wills of the animals, I would have died by violence long ago.'

That evening, when the sun was starting to sink behind

the thorn trees and the creatures of the jungle were afoot, we jeeped with Chandra Tilleke, a Government tracker, to the rock massif of Welmal Kema and, climbing to the top of the granite saddle, lay down to wait. There were seven of us, and all but the tracker and I were ladies, most of whom had never been in the jungle before. Ranging from my daughters, Mary 7, Rene 13, and Phillippa 15, the galaxy included our guests, Isabel Van Lockhorst 14, and her mother, Maisie Scofield, both of Sarasota, Florida.

Then, like a great grey shadow, an elephant drifted from the green mass of the jungle and stepped carefully on to the rock below us. He was a bull, with the scars in his sides and the sunken forehead of an old gentleman. Ten yards in front of him, up a gently sloping ledge, was a green pool, the age-old water-hole where he knew he could always quench his thirst, no matter how many of the short-lived jungle rivers ran dry. As he advanced, he tested the wind with his trunk and arched the wonderful hearing device of his ears. Then he stopped and swayed uneasily. Something was wrong. Faint on the evening breeze, he detected the smell of humans, but the wind was blowing fitfully down the canyons of the massif and he could not place the origin of the tainted air. He learned long ago to fear that smell, for with it he had heard the roar of the gun and felt the stinging of pain where the peasants' buckshot had stabbed him as he grazed on the forbidden paddy. For a moment more he hesitated and then, swinging slowly round, slipped silently back into the jungle.

There are only two areas left in Ceylon where one can be reasonably sure of seeing, on a short trip, the wild creatures of the Island. Ruhuna, the 53-square-mile national park on the south-east coast, and the 212-square-mile Wilpattu national park on the north-west coast. These game refuges are laced with jeep trails, and a limited number of parties, accompanied by the game-guards, are allowed to lease the Government bungalows for short

periods. In Ruhuna there are two such bungalows : Yala on the Menik Ganga River, where we stayed, and Buttawa, on the shore of the Bay of Bengal.

In mid-July 1955 I again took the aforesaid ladies, plus my wife and world-touring Ralph Straus of New York with his son Tom, on a pilgrimage to Ruhuna. Jungle tours in Ceylon are complicated affairs which take a deal of preparation. My wife and Dr. Chandra Gooneratne spent several days checking lists and loading the two jeeps which were to accompany the main party. Water is always a risky commodity east of Suez and, to be on the safe side, we took twenty-five gallons of drinking water with us. Unlike most of my jungle trips, where we lived at least partially off the land, we had to bring all of our food, no shooting or fishing being allowed in the national parks. In addition to the drivers, we imported a cook and a butler to help the bungalow-keeper.

Ruhuna is about 200 miles from Colombo ; it is in the dry zone section of the Island known as the low country, in contrast with the hills of the interior, and constitutes, except for great gneiss outcroppings such as Welmal Kema, a vast arid plain which covers all of the coastal stretches as well as the entire northern half of the Island. Green in the time of the north-east monsoons and baked sere and yellow in the periods of drought, the dry zone is the haunt of most of the country's big game. True, a few sambhurs, pigs and leopards inhabit the dank jungles of the hill country, but the elephant, the buffalo, the spotted deer and the peafowl are confined to the low country, and in the slow-flowing rivers lurk crocodiles.

Ruhuna was the name of a kingdom after that of Vijaya, the legendary conqueror, who reputedly fathered the Sinhalese race some five hundred years before Christ. Be that as it may, we know that the city of Mahagamam existed in 307 B.C. and was located near the modern hamlet of Tissamaharama, twenty miles from the reserve. Mahagamam

was the capital and last stronghold of the Sinhalese who held out against the Tamil invaders from India. Contemporary with Anuradhapura, the city was then the centre of a vast complex of irrigated land which supported the royal capital as well as a great number of Buddhist monasteries. Even in today's jungles, one can trace the outline of the ancient tanks and see ruins of cave temples and dagobas on the rocky outcroppings.

Last year, C. W. Nicholas, the Warden of the Department of Wild Life, sent the game-ranger of Yala and a party of two guards and four watchers to explore some of the uncharted areas of the Yala Strict Natural Reserve. Travelling by compass, they reached and surveyed Dematagala, the highest hill in the reserve, and much of the surrounding country. On the summit of 1,001-foot Dematagala, they found a ruined dagoba and, at the foot of the southern face, the remains of a large monastery founded in pre-Christian times. They counted fifty-one drip caves, an unbreached dagoba nearly fifty feet high, the remains of four stone pillared buildings and two limestone images of the Buddha. The inscriptions were of the second century B.C.

While there is no accurate way of knowing exactly how many animals are in the park at any one time, De Silva, the game-ranger, told me that he estimated the elephants at 60 to 70; water buffalo at 400 to 600; sambhur at 150 to 200; spotted deer at 2,000 to 2,500; leopard at 30 to 40; bear at 40 to 50; and peafowl at 600 to 700.

High on a bank overlooking a bend of the Menik Ganga, or River of Gems, the sacred river of the god Kataragama, the Yala bungalow is superbly placed for viewing wild creatures. The Menik Ganga, unlike most rivers of the area, rarely runs completely dry and consequently is used by a vast head of game. The evening we arrived, five peacocks strutted out of the jungle and preened their gorgeous tails on the far bank, and at lunch the next day we

looked out of the window to see a huge bull elephant calmly swimming the river almost directly below the bungalow. Farther upstream, a wild water-buffalo eased his big frame into the water and paid not the slightest attention to a ten-foot crocodile which swam within six feet of his rump and then, evidently deciding that it was not up to such a bite, swam away.

The behaviour of this reptile was particularly interesting in that it is well known that the saurians will devour both deer and domestic cattle. The inhabitants of a village on the lower reaches of the Mahaweli Ganga told me that they had lost five steers to a big crocodile during one month just prior to our arrival there. These fresh-water crocodiles are rarely dangerous to man, and Chandra and I, as well as our boys, swam in both the Mahaweli and the Menik Ganga in pools which we knew held crocodiles. The crocodiles inhabiting the salt-water estuaries, however, are said to be extremely dangerous and there are many cases of man-eating on record.

The Menik Ganga teems with fish and it was all I could do to refrain from casting a plug over its inviting waters. I saw giant loolas, plump vegetable-eating geramis, the surge and splash made by a striking mahseer, and walayas, the fresh-water sharks, as well as a host of smaller river fish whose names I did not know. Protected by the god and the law, they had nothing to fear from net or line.

Except for a few rock massifs from which one can see safely, it is a law of the park that the animals must be viewed from cars. Accordingly, we split our party into two troops and sallied forth in the dawns and sunsets; for from first light to about eight a.m. and from four to twilight are the best times. Then the heat of the day is gone and the jungle dwellers are moving. The animals have become so used to the sight of the cars that they pay little attention to them. A person on foot, however, would make them very nervous and, in the case of the bear

or elephant, perhaps dangerous. There are exceptions. Recently, the Honourable Shirley Corea, Minister of Commerce, was chased in a jeep by an unimpressed pachyderm.

There are numerous fresh-water lakes known as *wewas* in the area, and on the bank of the Wilapalawewa we saw a whole herd of elephants. The distance was only some five hundred yards and the glasses brought the great ones close enough to see the blinking of their little black eyes. There were a bull, six cows, three half-grown calves and a very small baby calf. Quite unaware of our presence, the herd was standing knee-deep in the *wewa*, squirting water on each other and having a pleasant afternoon chat. The rumbling tones that all elephants make could be plainly heard across the water.

We climbed Jamboragala, literally deep-water rock, for *gala* means rock in Sinhalese. Larger than Welmal Kema, this great outcropping rises several hundred feet above the plain and contains, on its vast rounded sides, numerous *kemas*, or water-holes. The approach to one of these is so steep that generations of animals have fallen in, and the Wild Life Service, after cleaning out several tons of whitening bones, has placed barbed wire round the hole and surmounted the stakes with the skulls of the drowned. I saw the bones of elephant, water-buffalo, sambhur, spotted deer and pig, and one little skull that might have been a monkey or a human.

From the top we raked the jungle with our glasses and, in the clearings, saw two big herds of spotted deer. I have shot deer all over the world and think that the spotted deer of Asia is the most beautiful species of the family. Even though lack of calcium in Ceylon militates against big antlers, I have seen some wonderful spreads in the jungles of Yala and Wilpattu. Sambhur deer are larger than spotted deer and far shyer. So tame have they become in the park, however, that we saw seven of the big brown quadrupeds.

Wild pig are only protected in the parks and can be

shot all the year round outside them. Consequently, they are among the wildest of the Island's game and retire into dense jungle soon after sunrise. In the park, they seem to have lost this fear and we passed within twenty-five yards of a 'sounder'. There was an old yellow-tusked boar with his sleek harem of six sows and numerous progeny. Sulking on the edge of the sounder was a thin jackal, hoping undoubtedly to pick off a piglet while mamma was not looking. He was taking a big chance, for not even the leopard will come to grips with the wild boar. There are cases on record where a big boar has driven a leopard off its kill. While primarily root and vegetable eaters, pig will eat carrion and kill and eat snakes.

Game has been protected in the ancient land of Lanka since the earliest days of her recorded history. More than two thousand years ago the Sinhalese kings promulgated laws prohibiting the killing of animals, the snaring of birds and the catching of fish within a wide area surrounding the sacred cities and monasteries. This protection was inspired by the tenets of the Buddha, which prohibit the taking of life, but in more modern times has been found insufficient to save the game. Accordingly, in 1909 the Game Protection Ordinance was passed by the Colonial Government and was followed in 1938 by the Fauna and Flora Protection Act which created three classes of protected areas.

Most important, from a preservation standpoint, was the formation of the Strict Natural Reserves. Now totalling 234·4 square miles, these reserves can only be entered by scientists and are designed to protect species from extinction. The national parks now enclose 410·5 square miles and also give the game complete protection but, of course, allow it to be disturbed. The third category of the reserves is that of the intermediate zones, which now total 487·2 square miles and in which licensed shooting is allowed during the open season.

America was the first country to pioneer modern game preservation. Yellowstone Park was dedicated in 1872 as 'a pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people'. Canada followed in 1885 with the Banff National Park, and the great Kruger National Park of Africa was established in 1898.

As interesting as the mammals are the birds of Ruhuna. From the river-bank beside the Yala bungalow, I watched a stork-billed kingfisher do his dive-bombing and invariably rise with a tiny silver fish in his bill. With glasses, I made out a small sapphire-blue kingfisher of whose identity I was not sure. It could have been either the Ceylon common kingfisher or the rarer Ceylon blue-eared kingfisher. I think it was the latter, as I could not make out the patch of brown that the common kingfisher has along the side of his head.

In the dense jungle along the far bank I identified a flock of rose-ringed parakeets as they darted through the trees, brighter than the green of the leaves. On another occasion I saw this parakeet's larger cousin, the Ceylon large parakeet, evidently a wanderer from its flock, for it was all alone. There are many pigeons in Ceylon and we saw a good assortment on this trip. Commonest was the Ceylon spotted dove, or ash dove. This little purple-headed dove was seen along all the jungle trails and, if we had not been in a park, would have furnished us with a toothsome pie. Handsomest of the pigeon family is the green imperial, a sleek grey-headed, green-backed bird that flies fast and is considered one of the best sporting birds in the jungle. We also saw many Ceylon pompadour green pigeons and a few Ceylon orange-breasted green pigeons.

Of the larger game birds, we saw many peafowl, with cocks far more common than hens. We also saw and heard junglefowl, although we found these jungle chickens almost as wild in the reserve as outside it. Once I heard

the cackle of a spurfowl but failed to see it. Even shyer than the junglefowl, the spurfowl seldom leave their haunts in the dim recesses of the forest.

On the whitened branch of a dead kumbukkan tree, a Ceylon serpent eagle was keeping his tireless vigil. A carnivore who feeds on lizards and snakes, the serpent eagle is among the largest of the Ceylon eagle family. Soon after I located him, the eagle gave vent to a piercing scream and dived from the branch, doubtless to drive its talons into its prey. I do not know whether or not serpent eagles eat poisonous snakes but there are certainly few cobras or tic polongas (Russell's vipers) in the jungle. In two years I have seen only one cobra in the wilds, and the only tic I saw was on the racecourse in the middle of Colombo. Of course the peafowl, the mongoose, the kabaragoya and the wild pigs are all deadly enemies of snakes and, when unmolested by man, keep them well under control.

We swam in the Bay of Bengal and then strolled along a beach whose sands told fascinating tales of wild life. I found the pugs of leopard, the plate-shaped track of an elephant, and the little slotted track of pig who love to feast on the mussels and seaweeds they find clinging to the rocks. Far out at sea rose the slim white pillar of the Little Basses Lighthouse, and behind us, dim in the distance, was the blue line of the Uva highlands.

Just behind the dunes was a cerulean-blue lagoon where I picked out many of the birds that I learned to identify with my friends, Bill Phillips and Eric Wikramanayake, on a previous trip to the dry zone of the south. I saw the Indian large pratincole, the Indian little pratincole and the red-wattled lapwing. A herd of wild water-buffalo lay somnolent in the middle of the lagoon, and high in the sky wheeled a Brahminy kite.

We saw but few monkeys in the park. Attracted by the paddy-fields of civilization and the absence of their

deadly enemy, the leopard, the monkeys tend to stay close to the villages. Those we did see were wanderoos, the grey wise-looking species. We did not see the smaller red monkeys that are so destructive to crops.

We heard several bears at night but saw only one, a half-grown young fellow who cantered away into the bush. The bungalow-keeper told me that recently two bears had fought under the big tree ten feet from the house and that the guests then in residence were so scared that they didn't leave the building until long after dawn the next day. That the animals get used to the bungalow and cease to fear it or its occupants is amply attested by the experience of my friends, Dr. Bryant and Penny Moore, who were spending a week-end at Yala six months ago.

The Moores and their two children had retired and almost fallen asleep when Penny happened to look up suddenly and saw something resembling a great snake poke its head slowly through the open window. She cried out and it was withdrawn. Dashing out on the porch, Dr. Moore saw the silhouette of an elephant lumbering away. Rajapakse thinks this was the same young female that scared Brownie.

Rajapakse has spent the last ten years as keeper for the Buttawa and Yala bungalows. Even though a good Buddhist, he believes firmly in Kataragama and keeps a candle burning to the local god every night. He says he is a strict vegetarian, and claims that as long as he refrains from eating either meat or fish he will be protected by the god. He was referring to the undeniable fact that some of the pilgrims who die on the way to Kataragama are eaten by leopards. The big cats then get a taste for human flesh and a few may become confirmed man-eaters.

Many legends lend potency to the prohibition of killing animals or catching fish within the sacred precincts of Kataragama's domain. Rajapakse told me that there used to be Veddahs in the Yala area, but that they killed pigs

with their bows and immediately after this sin all of them were devoured by leopards.

Basic religious convictions do not interfere with belief in Kataragama. Buddhists, Moslems, Christians, all worship at this essentially Hindu shrine. Buddhists and Moslems even have their own shrines in the Kataragama Temple area and maintain their own priests and mullahs there. The Catholic prohibition against worshipping false gods seems, in many cases, to be equally ineffective. During my last trip to Kataragama, I talked in the temple to a Catholic mother who was praying to Kataragama for a son.

The annual pilgrimage to the shrine was on and we saw miles of humble people trudging along the roads. By ancient right, they had crossed the virgin jungles of the Strict Natural Reserve, forded the Menik Ganga, and then passed along the main road of the park area where we saw them. They ranged from babes in arms to old people barely able to hobble. They had no wheeled transport but had come vast distances, some even from South India where the fame of Kataragama spread long ago. They carried their food with them and drank what water they could find.

The high point of the pilgrimage is the cleaving of the Menik Ganga by the High Priest, who smites the water with the Golden Sword. The purified liquid is then bottled, to be used as holy water during the ensuing year. Strangely enough, the High Priest of Kataragama has always been a Buddhist. In fact, Buddhists are reported to have been in charge of the shrine since the conversion of the Island by Mahinda.

Unfortunately, we visited Kataragama a week before the Sword Ceremony, the fire-walking and the dragging of carts attached to fish-hooks which are run through the flesh of holy men's backs. We did, however, get a picture of the preparations for the great event and attended *pooja*

ceremonies in several of the temples. I was proud of my girls, who behaved with dignity and understanding even though Rene is a good Quaker and Phillippa is keenly interested in Moral Rearmament, two religious philosophies that have little in common with the worship of Kataragama. Like the rest of us, however, they were deeply impressed by the faith of the pilgrims, especially when we questioned some of them and found they had walked from Jaffna, the extreme north of the Island, and had taken months on the way. Much of their journey was through jungle and the thought occurred to us that perhaps the begging-bowl was a better means of studying wild life than the jeep.

As already stated, the Strict Natural Reserves and the national parks are surrounded by intermediate zones where licensed shooting is permitted ; in March of 1954, I booked the east intermediate zone of Yala for a hunting trip.

Situated in the remote Panama district of the Eastern Province of Ceylon, the zone is a licensed hunting area of some 250 square miles. Along with the intermediate zones around Wilpattu National Park, it harbours the greatest concentration of wild game left on the Island. Herds of elephant and wild buffalo, sambhur and axis deer, pig, leopard and bear are all plentiful within the zone. Elephant and buffalo are protected, but a reasonable bag of the other animals can be anticipated.

It is a lovely land of open meadows, known as *eliyas*, bordering densely wooded islands of jungle. Centuries ago, in the time of Sinhalese kings, these meadows were the beds of irrigation tanks, and it is only because they are covered with water during the monsoons that the jungle is still held back. Huge grey rocks, looking like prehistoric dinosaurs, dot the landscape. Bagura Rock, the granite giant that dominates the whole area where we camped, is a massive whale-shaped boulder 150 feet high

and 500 yards long. The ancient chiefs used it as a fortress, and the depression where they stored rain-water and the huge rocks with which they repelled attackers can still be seen. Even though it is a strenuous climb for a man, elephants are often seen dusting themselves on the top.

Our camp was pitched on the Bagura Plain, a cropped green lawn of land that stretches to the marshy edge of a shallow lake known as Bagura Kalapuwa. Lying in my tent in the crimson dawns, I could see herds of wild buffalo browsing on the edge of the dark water, and beyond them, near the green wall of the jungle, the tan mass of moving axis deer.

Half the fun of a shooting trip is the company and we could not have gathered a more congenial group. William Abeysekera, president of the Ceylon Hunting Club, his wife Loy, vice-president Chandra Gooneratne and his wife Margaret made up the members' contingent of the expedition, while Commander and Barbara Nixdorff and John Plakias of the U.S. Embassy constituted the initiates. The term initiates had only a temporary significance. Before a candle burning to the hunting god, Devio, they were taken into the Club on the first night's camp and are now full members in good standing.

We were happy in securing the services of Peter Jayawardana, Ranger of Yala East. An intelligent Sinhalese of thirty-nine, he served with the 8th British Army in the Middle East and was later a member of the Ceylon police force before he was appointed ranger. He has the real feeling for animals and the basic love of the jungle that must go with a successful career as a ranger. His life is a lonely one and I believe would be made much easier if he were given some transportation. It is virtually impossible for him to cover his area on foot. A jeep would more than pay for itself as it could also be rented to hunters. Jayawardana supplied us with two excellent trackers, T. G. Subasingha and P. Karolis. The only other local labour

was supplied by small and grinning Kalu Banda, a twelve-year-old boy whom we picked up at Aragum Bay to show us the devious twenty-mile trail to camp.

In the tropics, jungle life moves in the dawn and the sunset, and during the great heats of the day it wisely slumbers in the thickets. The hunter's rising time is therefore well before dawn, so, by the time the first rose-pink glow showed across the lake, Jayawardana, John and I had gulped our good hot coffee and were settled in the jeep for the first preliminary expedition. Our objective was Aliya Wala, literally elephant-hole, a small tank some five miles from camp.

Before we reached the beginning of the jungle trail, we drove across hundreds of acres of riparian sedge grass where a myriad birds rose before us: vivid green bee-eaters, white and grey plover, delicate-legged sandpipers and snowy-white egrets. Peafowl had been calling with their raucous screams all round camp and, soon after we sallied forth, we saw a gorgeous cock bird trailing his green, blue and gold train behind him. I have mixed feelings on peafowl. Undoubtedly they are a scourge of the snakes so should be spared, but on the other hand they make one of the best meals to be found in the jungle and are no easy job to bag. We compromised by shooting the cock but sparing his hen.

The Aliya Wala is one of the most strikingly beautiful ponds I have ever seen. It is entirely covered with white water-lilies and, as we approached it, a baby crocodile slipped out of the overhanging branches of a banyan tree and made a fine swan dive into the water. Jayawardana told me that young crocodiles often climb low trees on the banks to get nearer to the sun. On the farther bank, a fawn scarcely more than a few days old stood stiffly on his long legs and wiggled his ears at us. From the jungle behind, his mother gave a warning bark and with an ungainly little jump he slipped into the bushes.

Near Aliya Wala is Kiri Pokuna Kema, meaning milk-pond hole. This is a great pile of rounded granite rocks in the centre of which is a deep pool of greenish water. Even in the worst droughts there is water, and during the dry season all the game of the area must perforce slake their thirst there. Aloy Perera, the game photographer, took a movie of a baby elephant caught in this hole, while a line of other parched animals impatiently waited their turns in the surrounding jungle. The baby was finally liberated by building a stage of rocks so that he could scramble out. The rocks were covered with the dung of elephants and sambhur, and in a sandy space between the boulders were the pad-marks of a big leopard.

Bagura Plain is only a few miles from the sea and often, when the wind is right, one can hear the thunder of the breakers. One bright morning after the dawn shoot we all drove in the jeep to the edge of the dunes and then climbed out of the jungle to the high billowing sand-hills. Wild pig love to root for turtle eggs along the beaches and even the leopard must find sea food attractive because the tracks of both were everywhere. The big combers of the Indian Ocean were battering the open beaches, but we found a place where the force of the seas was broken by a series of protecting rocks and enjoyed a delicious swim.

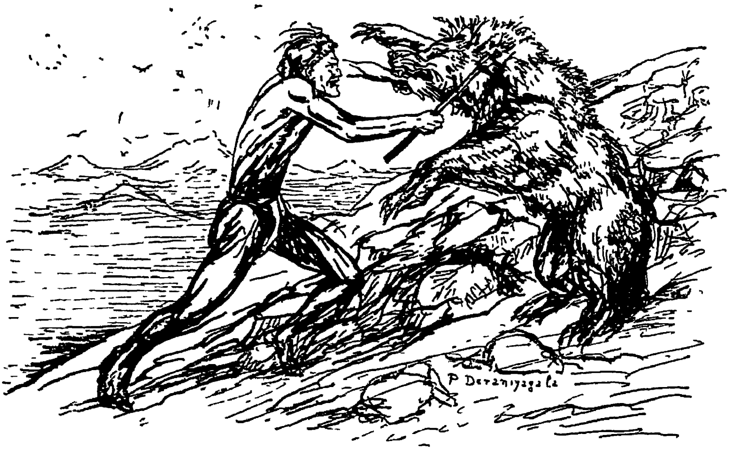
Food on a shooting trip deserves and gets far more attention than it does in civilization; our meals, thanks to the united efforts of Loy and Margaret, plus the cooking services of one of our Embassy drivers, Ernest Kotelawala, and Velu, the Nixdorffs' number-one boy, were superb culinary triumphs. Roast and curried venison, roast pea-fowl, fried and curried imperial pigeon, baked garganey duck, grilled snipe, fried fish from the lake, made up the main courses, while oranges, bananas, apples, wood apples and papayas made fine desserts. Tea, coffee, bourbon, Scotch and rain-water washed down these delectable messes.

The tents were borrowed from the Boy Scouts and the Ceylon Army. The former were snug enough to resist the nightly downpours, but the shelter derived from the army was a sad and watery affair that soaked the ladies inside it. We brought our own camp beds and mosquito-nets but found the latter unnecessary as there were virtually no mosquitoes. As we were camped some twenty miles from the nearest village there did not seem to be much danger from malarial types anyway.

Not the least of the conveniences of an encampment of the Ceylon Hunting Club were the sanitary arrangements. A completely enclosed toilet made of canvas sheets and complete with seat was set up. A similar enclosure was fitted with a huge tub of water and a mirror for bathing and shaving. Plenty of camp chairs and tables also helped to make life about as luxurious as one could wish for in any jungle.

Despite the fact that the Aragum Bay area is only about seven degrees north of the Equator and the hot season was beginning, the weather was far from unbearable. True, the tropic sun blazed away, but snowy clouds often broke its force and a cooling wind from the sea blew almost all day. The nights were deliciously cool and necessitated a blanket.

The shallow lakes and lagoons of the area were alive with crocodiles and we saw several more than twelve feet long. They scuttled for the water before we could take careful aim. This is one of the few places left in Ceylon where these reptiles are plentiful, the American demand for women's shoes made of their skins having virtually exterminated them in more accessible areas. Our guides told us that they seldom attack human beings but they do not hesitate to snap up deer. The crocodile lies almost entirely submerged with only his eyes and snout above water. When the deer bends over to drink, the steel jaws snap closed on his nose, he is dragged into the water, and it is all over but the crunching.



A big male bear rushed out of the jungle and sank his teeth into Garuwa's arm

By common consent, the most unpredictable and therefore the most dangerous animal of the Ceylon jungles is the bear. Garuwa, one of Jayawardana's trackers, can testify to their prowess, for he has only one arm. Some eight years ago Garuwa and a friend were coming along a jungle trail, near the site of our camp, when a big male bear suddenly rushed out of the jungle and sank his teeth into Garuwa's arm. The other man was armed with a machete and succeeded in driving the bear away but not before the beast had literally torn out the arm from the socket.

The lake and plain of Bagura swarm with wild buffalo and even though the Ceylon water-buffalo is seldom dangerous unless attacked, the old bulls which have left the herds are often apt to be nasty customers. One craggy old gentleman gave the tracker and me a half-charge before he thought better of it and went splashing off into the marsh. I was glad he did, as I could not forget the chilling experience of Sir Samuel Baker who was trapped in waist-deep mud in just such a swamp area and suddenly found himself

face to face with an old bull, which he thought he had killed but which proved to be only dazed. Those were the days of muzzle-loading rifles and Sir Samuel's was empty. What is more he had exhausted his shot. Quick thinking, however, saved the day. In his change pocket he found several silver sixpences and, loading with these, gave the bull such a charge of Her Majesty's mint that it dropped in its tracks.

We hoped to shoot a sambhur stag, an old boar with tusks and a leopard, but as John Plakias had never fired a shot at game in his life and Sam Nixdorff had done relatively little shooting, between us there were bound to be some exciting first experiences.

Sam's first opportunity came sooner than he expected; he was following a peafowl, a few yards off the trail where he had left the jeep, when he suddenly came face to face with a young leopard. Chandra, thinking that Sam was loaded only with number four shot, shouted at him not to shoot. The leopard, of course, made a bound into the jungle and was gone. Chandra's advice was wise but he did not know that Sam's automatic shotgun was also loaded with SGs.

The animals we miss are always the ones we remember best, and soon after Sam's encounter with the leopard I glanced down a jungle aisle and saw a magnificent sambhur stag staring at me from about a hundred yards' distance. It was late evening and the light was poor but I was sure of a kill when I pressed the trigger. The stag leapt into the air and I knew I had creased him. Subsequent careful tracking, however, revealed no blood; the bullet must merely have grazed his skin.

The pig proved most elusive. Everywhere on the green plains were the deep gashes where they had rooted during the night, and on one occasion the grey backs of a big sounder were seen scurrying into the jungle, but shots we did not have. Jayawardana said that owing to the recent

rains, the pig were remaining in the jungles instead of coming out to the lakes where we could spot them. Next to the bear, pig are considered the most courageous animal in the jungles. There are countless incidents of even sows attacking armed men when they felt that their litters were in danger.

The most exciting adventure of this present trip, however, had little to do with hunting. I had read of Bambaragas Talawa, 'the high place with rock-bee trees', the great rocky massif where the last of the Veddahs were said to have fled from the leopards and where more than a thousand years ago the Sinhalese kings had ordered a thirty-foot-long recumbent statue of the Buddha to be carved in the living rock. Jayawardana knew the place well and said he would be happy to take me there if we could get through the jungle aisles in the jeep. He added that it was a good ten miles away and known as the haunt of bear and elephant.

Taking a rifle and Subasingha, we started at four in the afternoon and, soon after leaving the now familiar trails and *eliyas* near the camp, climbed over a shallow pass into a virtual fairyland of glens. The area had not been hunted in more than a year and Jayawardana himself had not been there in four months. Herd after herd of fat, wide-eyed deer stared at us from the moist pastures and then ambled leisurely into the jungle. A pair of handsome red and black jungle cocks raced along before us, and flights of golden plover rose from the numerous swampy areas. Once we caught the acrid smell of decaying flesh and, stepping off the trail, found the remains of a big sambhur with the pugs of a leopardess in the ground around it.

As we drove further into the jungle, the character of the country changed perceptibly. The open *eliyas* gave place to narrow valleys enclosed by dense jungle and the trail became hard to find. Elephants had been along it recently and had pulled down trees across it in order to get at the

tender leaves. Heavy banks of green weeds, similar to rhododendrons, grew on either side of the trail and I could not help thinking what excellent cover it would make for a bear.

Suddenly, at the end of a long dark tunnel of jungle, a black mass rose before us: the base of the great rocks. We left the jeep and climbed on to a wide shelf of granite in the centre of which shone a pool of yellow water. On the edge lay a pile of droppings so fresh that the elephant that made them could not be far away. Gripping the rifle more tightly, I walked across the shelf to where it fell sharply away to the line of the jungle thirty feet below. Then, with a crash, a big bull elephant poked his head out of the tangle and stood facing me. We eyed each other gravely for a full minute before he swung left-handed and vanished into the jungle. Elephants are seldom dangerous, but I was just as glad to have the rifle with me, as the old boy could have reached me in a half-dozen steps and there was absolutely no cover on the bare rock.

Above the elephant pool, Jayawardana showed me an ancient cave where a hermit used to live and where faithful Buddhists still occasionally come to write their names on the rock face. He said that few foreigners had been to the place and that I was the first he had taken there himself. It had a wild and lonely beauty that I would not forget.

The main purpose of our trip, however, was to shoot a leopard and, with this objective in mind, one of the first things we did on reaching the hunting area was to shoot some deer and stake them out as bait. Three tempting carcasses were offered in three carefully selected locations, but by the third and last day of our stay only one kill had been visited. The tracks showed that the visitor was a big male leopard, the finest trophy that Ceylon has to offer. Lots were drawn between the five of us and Sam Nixdorff won.

Leopards usually feed in the evening, preferably between four and eight, so soon after four, Sam and Karolis were settled inside a brush hide fifteen feet from the spot where the carcass of the axis buck was securely tied to a tree. Karolis is deaf but has one of the keenest pairs of eyes in the forest service. There were two apertures in the hide of about four inches in diameter each. Sam's artillery consisted of a 12-bore Savage shotgun loaded with four SGs and a solid lead slug.

By six-fifteen, the sun had set and a three-quarter moon was riding high in a clear starlit sky. It was a perfect light for night shooting provided, of course, that the leopard approached the bait correctly and did not try to reach it by way of the hide. If he took the latter course, although there was virtually no chance that he would attack, he would be bound to see the watchers and make off.

Time passed. The bugs, which had been giving Sam trouble early in the vigil, quieted down and he was just beginning to think that pussy would miss his evening meal when Karolis gripped his arm. Leaning slowly forward, Sam glanced through the right hand peep-hole and saw a big leopard crouched over the kill. He fired immediately, but owing to the smoke was unable to judge the effect of the shot. A minute later he turned on the flashlight and saw the leopard trying to raise himself on his forelegs. When the beam hit him the leopard growled and Sam fired again, breaking the spinal column.

The leopard was seven feet from the tip of his tail to his whiskers. He was not over three years old and was in beautiful shape with a fine, clearly marked coat and strong white teeth.

Chapter X

THE BEAR OF WILPATTU

As I noted previously, there are two great wild life preserves in Ceylon — the Wilpattu National Park, about 110 miles north of Colombo, and the Ruhuna National Park, approximately 200 miles south-east of the capital. Both these refuges are flanked by so-called intermediate zones where carefully controlled shooting is permitted. Through the kindness of Mr. C. W. Nicholas, Chief Warden of the Ceylon Wild Life Authority, our party was granted the first licences of the season for the Wilpattu south intermediate zone. The party, organized by Dr. Chandra Gooneratne, of my Embassy, consisted of his wife Margaret; my wife Irene and daughter Phillippa; Mr. William Abeysekera, Chief Engineer of the Ceylon Government, and his wife Loy; Dr. Bryant Moore, head of a Colombo Plan doctors' team; Kotelawala, the number-one boy; Lonappu, the cook; and the author. Transport consisted of two jeeps and a station wagon.

Leaving Colombo in the hot dawn, we were soon motoring northwards up the west coast road. This is a stretch of country that particularly appeals to me. On the left, through the groves of coconut palms, one can see the blue water of the Negombo Lagoon with its fleets of outriggers scudding in before the breeze with their early catch of fish. The people of this, the Negombo District, have been Catholics for nearly five hundred years and the white walls of their little churches gleam through the greenery.

Beyond the town of Puttalam, a dirt road branches to

the left and some ten miles along it is the entrance to the park. Here we showed our licences and picked up Mattu Banda and Malkami, the two Sinhalese trackers supplied by the Wild Life Service. Incidentally, only vegetarians are supposedly hired for the Wild Life Service, but ours seemed very fond of meat.

A few miles farther, we arrived at Maradan Maduwa, where the Chief Ranger, Mr. Alwis, welcomed us and gave us a briefing on what to expect, in the way of sport in the intermediate zone, and possible views of the game in the park proper, through part of which we had to drive before we reached the shooting area. Most famous of the denizens of this part of the park, he said, was a snow-white axis doe which, with luck, we might see grazing near one of the numerous tanks. He added that there were several herds of elephant in the park, as well as leopard, bear, sambhur and axis deer.

The road wound through low scrub-jungle, strangely reminiscent of Africa. The ground was predominantly sandy and evidently supported few big trees. One saw occasional satin and ebony trees, but stunted varieties of palu made up most of the timber. The thickets were dense and generously laced with thorns. It is the type of country that would present problems with a wounded leopard or an adventure-minded bear.

Leaving the well-wishing ranger, we drove into the park with eyes peeled. A magnificent sambhur stag jumped up almost in front of the jeep and raced away into the bushes. He was the first of many deer, both axis and sambhur, that we saw. Every *wila*, or open swampy glade, had its complement of grazing stock, and just as the ranger had predicted, we finally came to a herd among whose brown dappled members shone out the white coat of an albino doe. We found tracks of numerous elephants, but saw none. Until the recent rains, the park had been too dry for them and the herds migrated down to the Kala Oya.

Oya means small river and *Ganga* big river. We saw all kinds of birds including green pigeons, snipe, partridge, spotted doves and junglefowl.

Seventeen miles farther, we left the park proper and came to the circuit hut at Tala Wila where we made our permanent camp. The hut is a concrete, tin-roofed shack consisting of a generous porch and three small inside rooms. We used the rooms for storage, the porch for eating, and strung up tarpaulins outside, under which we put our camp beds and mosquito-nets. While there is very little malaria left in Colombo, there is some in the provinces, and I saw that the family took Aralen before we left. I also purchased snake vaccine for both cobra and Russell's viper bites, and a hypo-needle. Chandra and Abeysekera were both old hands at jungle living and soon had a veritable Ritz in operation, complete with bathroom seat affixed to saplings.

The camp site could not have been more effective. The hut was situated at the end of a forest glen which led down to a meadow of about a hundred acres, in the centre of which was a shallow lake of clear water. Sitting on the porch in the evening, we could see the deer come to drink and watch the teal wheel in for their night's feeding.

That evening Abeysekera took a long shot at a young doe and knocked her over nicely. There is nothing tastier than young axis doe barbecued over an aromatic fire, so after a good dinner we dropped into bed. Unlike Colombo, the jungle is deliciously cool at night and I was actually cold under two sheets. The last thing I remember was Chandra saying something about the oil from peacocks' feet being good for almost anything.

Dawn in the jungle is a wonderful time. Before the first rays of light appear, a great silence lies on the land. Then suddenly a faint glow shows in the east and the jungle comes suddenly to life; shamas sing their sweet arias, spotted doves coo; junglecocks challenge their peers and the peacock screeches his greetings. Last salute to the

passing night is that of the nightjar who taps out his eerie SOS just before the sun tops the banyan trees.

In this wakeful world of sound, we went down to the meadow before the hut to shoot some pigeons. The green pigeon of Ceylon is a fast and wily bird and takes a bit of stalking as well as shooting. He hides in the tallest trees and, when flushed, takes off like a green bullet. Net bag for three guns was a bare half-dozen birds. A few snipe were jumped from the sedge grass around the lake but the main flight had not yet come in from the North. Returning by eight, we had a fine breakfast of eggs, rice, curried venison, coffee and bread, and then retired to books and writing to while away the hot hours until early afternoon.

At three, we started in the jeep for the first serious shoot of the trip. The Forest Service keeps a series of jungle trails wide enough for such a conveyance to get through, but the going is far from easy. Giant ant-hills, built by those fanatic workers the white ants, sprang up in the trail overnight and had to be detoured ; dry beds of streams forced sharp descents and even sharper ascents, and the muddy wallows of wild buffalo formed formidable hazards as the driver never knew how deep they would be.

Abey drove while Moore and I sat beside him in the front seat. The Doctor had a shotgun to cope with jungle-fowl and peafowl while I carried a rifle to try for deer, pig or bear. Behind us rode the ladies and behind them the trackers held on somehow to the back of the overloaded jeep.

As we rounded a sudden curve, a fine sambhur stag with a great sweep of antlers jumped into the middle of the trail and stood facing us at not more than fifty yards' distance. I threw up the ·405 but before I could aim carefully he took another bound and was gone. Shortly afterwards a band of wanderoo monkeys started chattering and a herd of axis deer charged down the dry bed of a stream and across the road.

The junglecock is one of the handsomest game birds and is found only in the tropics. I shot many, twenty years ago in Indo-China, and, remembering how good they tasted, resolved to collect some of the Ceylonese variety. The evening is the best time to find them, and shortly after we saw the herd of axis deer, a big black and russet cock darted across the road. Abey jerked the jeep to a stop and I fired where I had last seen the bird disappear. Luckily some of the pellets reached him and the tracker found him easily. The spurs were razor-sharp, and on the wattling of the comb were a host of ticks. Subsequently, we shot several more junglefowl and a brace of green pigeons.

Later, we left the jeep and climbed up through the jungle to an open meadow where the tracker showed us the overgrown remains of a forgotten temple. Only the outline of its pillars could still be traced, but near by, on top of a huge rock, were carved old Sinhalese characters and what was undoubtedly an ancient game consisting of squares laid out very like a backgammon board. Beneath the rock was a large cave full of elephant droppings and bear hairs. Evidently both Bruin and the jungle king like to scratch there.

Driving home in the short sunset of the East, I learned something of the local gods. Chandra translated while the trackers talked. It seems that the reason we did not kill a big animal was because someone had put a charm on us. This charm, known as *vedi velkuma*, originated in the dim past of Ceylon and is still considered extremely potent. It is used mainly by poachers and consists of a set of magic words, which, when said and accompanied by the throwing of four small stones to the four points of the compass, effectively prevents the person against whom it is directed from bringing home the bacon. In other words, even if the charmed hunter shoots, wounds and kills the animal, he will never be able to find it.

The situation was far from hopeless, however, as the

local god Aiyah Nayake Devio was more powerful, and merely needed to be invoked to remove the charm. After dinner Mattu Banda nailed an old oil-can to a tree and placed therein a husked coconut, a penny and a lighted candle. Soon after the little shrine had begun to glimmer in the twilight, we heard the cough of a leopard and far off the trumpet of an elephant; Aiyah Nayake Devio was indeed a potent deity, and we went to bed with high hopes for the morrow.

Leaving the girls to get their beauty sleep, the four of us, with the two trackers, left before dawn and, driving some five miles into the jungle, left the jeep and started into the bush in two parties — the Doctor and Abey with Malkami, and Chandra and I with Mattu Banda.

The jungle was very dense and the thorn bushes tore at our legs and arms. There are two schools of thought regarding hunting clothes. Those who believe in short sleeves, shorts and sneakers (shoes with rubber soles), and those who believe in long sleeves, long trousers and snake-proof boots. I personally favour the latter costume. It is certainly a hotter outfit but it saves one from the shorter thorns, ticks and leeches and maybe from the bite of a Russell's viper or a cobra. It is warmer in the dawn, and believe it or not, the jungle, even when it is only seven degrees north of the equator, can be a very chilly place in the early morning.

Forcing our way through the worst of the brambles, we came on a game trail and stopped at a swampy place to study its message. We saw the pug-marks of a large leopard; the huge round depressions of a mature elephant and the saucer indentations of an elephant calf. Farther on, the bank was torn open by the unmistakable claw-marks of a bear and everywhere were the cloven-hoof impressions of axis and sambhur deer. Near a big slough, we came on the fresh tracks of wild buffalo. Next to the elephant, they are the largest animals in the Ceylon jungles and are quite

capable, given provocation, of launching themselves into a charge, which, however, they seldom drive home unless they have been wounded.

Soon afterwards, we were wending our way along the dry bed of a stream on whose banks grew a dense forest of banyan trees, when we were suddenly arrested by a crash of sound and a shower of cold water. We had frightened a band of wanderoos and they shook the dew-laden branches as they hurled themselves away through the tree-tops. These monkeys are frequently followed by deer, as the wanderoos often toss down tender shoots and fruits from the trees which the deer delight in picking up. Almost immediately after the band made off, we heard the drumming of hooves and caught a fleeting view of a sambhur.

Mattu Banda repeatedly said he found fresh tracks of bear and showed me an ant-hill where the inhabitants were still racing around in excitement. Then we heard a faint noise off to the right. It sounded to me like a branch rubbing across a mat but Mattu Banda froze and whispered, 'Walaha.' We heard the noise again and advanced silently toward it — Chandra and I gripping our rifles and Mattu Banda his jungle knife, or *kathe*.

The Ceylon bear has a reputation for courage and Mattu Banda murmured to Chandra that we must watch our flanks and rear, as the bear might take it into his mind to charge from the least-expected quarter. The jungle, as I have said, was very dense and we could not see more than twenty feet in any direction. In addition, owing to the thorn trees, it was necessary to bend over frequently so that progress was extremely slow. The stalk, however, was of no avail. Either Bruin did not like the look of us or Devio's magic was not as strong as we thought.

By nine, the sun had crept high enough to make walking no longer comfortable and we retreated to the jeep. Abey and the Doctor returned soon afterwards with a big peafowl and we drove back to camp. Not a blank day but

certainly a disappointing morning. I mean disappointing only in a material sense. Time spent in the wilds is never wasted and, like Mr. Jorrocks, I would rather have a blank day with hounds than no day at all.

One of the great luxuries of camping in the tropics is the pleasure derived from a bath. The boys had brought huge cans of cold water from the lake and the impact of this cooling deluge on our steaming bodies was extremely pleasant. Then, after a good breakfast of peafowl, green gram, eggs, bacon and strong coffee or tea, we had the cots carried out under the banyan trees and talked, read or slept through the hot hours of the day.

The four of us had diverse backgrounds and enjoyed learning something of each other's pasts. Chandra Gooneratne has had a particularly remarkable career. Educated at Trinity College, Kandy, he afterwards spent eight years at the University of Chicago, taking his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. In the First World War he served in Mesopotamia, Egypt and France with the Y.M.C.A. and, in the Second, as a captain with the Indian forces in France and Britain. For the past two years he has been Director of Films for the Information Office of my Embassy. William Abeysekera is in charge of the largest Government project in Ceylon, the factory at Kolonnawa, where he employs over two thousand workmen. Abey also has an enviable reputation as a hunter and has so far bagged twenty bears and five leopards. Dr. Moore fought in Italy and trained troops in Nigeria during the late war and headed a team of British doctors engaged in teaching at Ceylon hospitals.

Arising from a good sleep at three, we took to the jeep again and drove to another part of the jungle for the afternoon shoot. The road was badly dug up by wild boar and necessitated careful driving. We saw a pair of jackals, a mongoose and a civet cat, besides the usual complement of monkeys, junglefowl and giant lizards.

The giant lizards of Ceylon are of two kinds and

resemble prehistoric monsters. Met suddenly in the jungle, they give the uninitiated quite a turn. There is the talagoya, or monitor lizard, which grows to five feet in length and is quite harmless. His flesh is excellent and he has been killed off to a point where his survival can be assured only by rigid protection. The talagoya is brownish-grey in colour and capable of remarkable speed on his short stubby legs.

The kabaragoya resembles the talagoya but grows much larger, often to six feet, and has yellow spots over a brownish-black base colour. His tail is razor-sharp and can inflict a severe cut. The kabaragoya, even though uneatable, is also protected, as he is a killer of snakes. He is known as the farmer's friend, for he also keeps the paddy-fields free from reptiles and crabs.

The number of peafowl, mongooses and talagoyas in the area virtually ensured us against snakes. The peafowl is the cobra's and viper's most deadly enemy. The mere presence of the great birds seems to paralyse the snakes and they seldom try to escape. The peafowl then drive their needle-sharp beaks into the snakes' heads and after killing them devour them in entirety. Chandra said he once saw a peafowl playing with a snake as a cat would with a mouse. The bird gripped the snake with both claws, soared into the air and then dropped it. Swooping down he picked it up again and repeated the operation.

Before starting out from the jeep on foot, Mattu Banda told us of the ruins of a temple near by and led us along a jungle trail to a small clearing where eight granite pillars and a broken statue of the Buddha reposed. The figure, though headless and with both arms broken, gave an impression of such serenity that we instinctively hushed our voices. The position was that of the lotus seat with the hands folded and resting on the feet. Irene photographed the little temple but I think we will all remember it anyway.

We then divided our party — Abey, Mattu Banda and

I taking all four of the girls along with us while Chandra and Dr. Moore went off with Malkami. The ladies were carefully instructed to keep quiet, follow closely behind us and generally make themselves inconspicuous. This iron discipline was just beginning to wear off when Abey, peering through the jungle, beckoned to me and pointed out an axis buck at the far end of a clearing. The distance was a good hundred yards but I took careful aim and fired. Down came the buck with a bullet through his shoulder. He proved to be a young one, still in velvet, but a very fat specimen, weighing over a hundred pounds.

While this had been going on Dr. Moore and Chandra had been having a real adventure. In the bed of a dry stream their tracker picked up the trail of a sambhur buck with, superimposed on it, the pug-marks of a big leopard. The story was easy to read in the sand. The leopard was stalking the sambhur but he was obviously tired, for the marks were close together. For the best part of an hour they followed the spoor and finally came to the bed of another dry stream.

The Doctor was ahead and, glancing across the sand to the farther bank, he saw a big leopard stretched out asleep at its foot. The giant cat was lying on its side with its tail straight out behind it and all four paws extended to their fullest. Just such a sight, the Doctor said, as one would get of a leopard in Regent's Park Zoo on a sunny Sunday afternoon. Chandra saw the beast at almost the same moment but withheld his fire until the Doctor drew a bead and then let go. The Doctor was using my eight-millimetre Mannlicher with a telescopic sight and, probably owing to the excitement, aimed high. In any case, the leopard sprang to its feet and made off into the jungle, followed by a parting shot from Chandra. The tracker made an immediate reconnaissance but there were no signs of blood and it looked like a clean miss. Too bad, but still a thrill for all concerned. There are not many

places left in the world where one can even see a wild leopard — either awake or asleep. That night Aiyah Nayake Devio got two candles and a whole pile of pennies.

Next morning, on the dew-glistening grass of the lake shore, we witnessed a strange and wonderful dance. Two seven-foot rat snakes were rapturously engaged in their mating. The heavy black bodies were entwined in a great knot, but the heads were lifted several feet off the ground where they dipped and caressed each other in an infinitely graceful courting.

The rat snake and the cobra are erroneously reported to mate with each other and produce a mixed bag of true cobras and true rat snakes. The rat snake carries no poison but can inflict a nasty bite if annoyed. Owing to his fine work on the rats, he is not usually harmed by the villagers.

The only constrictor in the Island is the python, which grows to a great size — specimens of over twenty feet are rare — but there are few cases on record of one attacking a man. I heard vague reports in Burma of python occasionally taking babies, but their usual diet is pig or small deer. Abey shot a big python last year, with a whole, partially digested axis buck in his stomach.

The evening shoot was to be the last of the trip as we were scheduled to start for Colombo the following morning; despite the many pleasures of the outing, we did feel that some tangible trophies of the hunt would be nice to have. Accordingly we set out early after lunch and, by three-thirty, were stalking through the jungle. Abey and I, with Mattu Banda and the girls, made up one party, while Chandra, the Doctor and Malkami made up the other. I remembered with nostalgia the bear noises of two days previous and decided to hunt the same country.

Scarcely had we alighted from the jeep when a magnificent axis buck bounded into the trail and gave me a perfect eighty-yard target. I dropped him with a careful shot through the lungs. Despite the shock force of the

300-grain soft-nose shell, the buck leapt forward and ran fifty yards before he folded up. The antlers were beautifully formed and the head very handsome.

Leaving the trail, we pushed on through dense jungle to the bear country. The tracker was leading, with me following closely; then came the four girls, and Abey brought up the rear.

We had left the thickets and were walking slowly

I immediately fired at where I thought the heart was

through a park-like meadow in which were scattered some islands of thorn bushes. Just as we were about to pass one of these islands at a distance of about twenty-five feet, Mattu Banda suddenly pulled my arm and whispered 'Walaha.' Glancing where he pointed, I saw a huge black form staring at us. He was standing and his little beady eyes had a concentrated glint of fear and savagery. I immediately fired at where I thought the heart was and he let out a scream of pain and anger. Abey had run forward and was standing beside me with his rifle poised ; the girls were cool as cucumbers and had not moved.

The bear then lunged out of the thicket toward us but my first shot had reached his spine and he fell forward on his face. I put two more bullets into his head to make sure and shouted to the tracker not to approach until I had reloaded and examined him first. All was over, however ; the old boy was quite dead. Standing a good four feet in height, he was armed with three-inch-long claws and great yellow fangs, one of which was broken at the base and was probably giving him some pain. He was in prime condition and fat as an alderman ; the coat was thick, black and alive with ticks.

Moving the carcass was no easy matter. We were half a mile from where we had left the jeep, but managed to make about half the distance. Then Abey drove the jeep through the jungle, risking four-inch thorns in his tyres, and we piled Bruin on to the engine hood.

There was no point in further hunting as I had two fine trophies, so we turned homewards. Good things often come in threes, however, and just as we were crossing the dry bed of a stream, a big python crossed the trail. I fired and nearly severed his head from the body. Despite this awful wound, he writhed vigorously and attempted to throw a coil about me when I grabbed his tail to prevent him from disappearing into the bushes. The snake was eleven feet long and had a girth, at its largest circumference, of

fourteen inches. It had obviously not fed for some time, as the stomach, when we skinned it later, was found to be quite empty except for a few small frogs.

Back at camp we skinned the buck and python and dragged the bear into the circle of the light so that the jackals could not get at it during the night. Then we broke open the last of the whisky and drank many toasts, which inevitably led to plans for more hunting parties later on.

My next shooting trip to Wilpattu did not take place until January of 1955; even though it was less successful from the standpoint of the game bagged, it did give us some exciting moments which I think will bear recording.

Leaving Anuradhapura, the historical city of Ceylon's ancient civilization, in the half-light of a misty morning, wraiths of fog were drifting over the placid expanse of King Tissa's tank and the old trees among the ruins were dripping pools of water on to the worn stones of forgotten temples and monasteries.

Soon after leaving the town, the hard surface of the road ended and our two jeeps and one trailer lunged into the churned mud of the Arippu road, down whose wandering course we bucked and swayed for some twenty laboured miles. Low thorn trees and dense matted undergrowth formed an almost solid barrier on either side of the trail as we rode down a primeval corridor in whose fastnesses a variety of wild life soon began to appear. A big jackal, wolf-grey in the early light, slunk across the way; wanderoo monkeys, looking like nervous Supreme Court judges with their distinguished side-whiskers, scrambled into the trees and sat looking solemnly at their cousins; red monkeys, the thieves of the fruit trees, chattered as they swung off into the upper terraces of the branches. There were also many birds, especially the gorgeous, painted junglecocks, one of which Abey bagged for the pot. We forbore to shoot a fine talagoya, the giant lizard, whose flesh is

esteemed by the Veddah aborigines as just the diet for nursing mothers.

At the ranger's camp at the entrance to the intermediate zone of Wilpattu East, we paused, showed our licences and picked up Isteven and Namhamy, two trackers of the Department of Wild Life. These men, plus Joseph, our Catholic, Tamil-speaking Sinhalese cook, Ernest Kotelawala, one of my drivers from the American Embassy, and Nonis, a servant of Abey's, made up the jungle staff. The hunters were William Abeysekera, Dr. Chandra Gooneratne, Dr. Bryant Moore, and myself.

Camp was made on the bund of an ancient tank, overlooking a brook known as the Halmilla Wewa Oya whose clear waters cut a narrow channel in the yellow sand of the stream-bed. Like all jungle river-beds, this one told its story clearly, for stamped in the yielding sand were the sharp slotted impressions of axis and sambhur deer, the smaller but deeper tracks of wild pig and, near a deep pool, the huge oval-shaped disks of an elephant.

On the bank I found a pile of fresh dung and Isteven said that *aliya*, the elephant, had crossed the stream early that morning. The tent, a canvas cathedral that would have done credit to Genghis Khan, was pitched under the spreading boughs of a halmilla tree, whose timber is prized for the making of arrack casks. The kitchen tent was raised under a neighbouring dimbiri tree, the bark of which is used for the preserving of fishermen's nets. Near-by groves were recognized as *ahatu*, the tree whose foliage is prized by the elephant. But perhaps the finest feature of the camp site was the view, for across the little Oya lay a jungle glade of great beauty and the tent was pitched so that we could lie on our cots, in the dawn and late evening, and watch the deer steal out to graze.

The jungles of Ceylon vary a good deal according to locality but almost all of them in the lowlands have grown-over ancient tanks or catchment areas for storing water,

and the surrounding fields where, in the old days, rice was cultivated. Such a heritage has resulted in a series of *damanas*, or park-like areas, where there are wide avenues of open grazing land interspersed with clumps of thick jungle. Except during the height of a monsoon when all of the Island is drenched, it is possible to drive a jeep through many of these *damanas*. As the trip to be described now was made in late January, when the north-east monsoon had virtually spent its force, we were able to negotiate some of the country even though the going was difficult. We used the jeeps only for reaching areas where we intended to hunt. The noise of the motors did not seem to frighten the deer but certainly scared away any pig and peafowl that heard us coming.

The first evening's shoot was memorable. Chandra and I, with Ernest Kotelawala carrying my water-bottle and camera, and Isteven tracking and bringing my shotgun, took off into the bush about four in the afternoon. The heat of the day was over and a light, refreshing breeze blew over the land. Leaving the jeep at the edge of a tree-dotted meadow, we had barely started across it when Isteven froze and, beckoning to me to come along beside him, pointed to the edge of the jungle. At first I could see nothing, but with the aid of the four-power Weaver 'scope on my Mannlicher eight-millimetre rifle, I was able to make out a huge axis buck standing staring at us. The range was over two hundred yards and the intervening branches so dense that the chances of a deflected bullet were excellent. I steadied the rifle, drew a long breath and squeezed the trigger. The buck bounded into the air and made off, quite unhurt.

In my younger days a miss on as fine a head as that would have evoked real anguish, but I was only half sorry to realize that the old boy was still lording it over his harem in the jungle. A buck was a necessity, however, for two excellent reasons besides the desire for a trophy: we needed meat for camp and, even more important, desired

bait for leopard. My next opportunity came when another buck, a smaller one but still fat and in prime condition, showed himself at about a hundred yards. This time I took longer and knocked him over with a well-placed shot through the shoulder. He proved to be a two-year-old with thin but well-grown antlers.

Tying up a bait for leopard is the job of a professional. First the deer was skinned, the fore and hind quarters removed for the table, and the carcass dragged to a lone tree standing some twenty feet from the nearest cover. Using *kiri vali*, the tough milk creeper, the body was lashed by the neck and antlers to the base of the tree. The bait was then left for the leopard to feed on, after which a hide would be made in the near-by jungle and one of us would wait for Mr. Leopard's next meal. Unfortunately, no leopard ever came to this bait.

The sun was beginning to set when we started home. Abey's jeep was leading the way when he suddenly swung round a jungle corner and came face to face with a leopard standing stock still in the middle of the trail. The big cat was head-on to us and, owing to a dip in the ground, looked smaller than he was. I thought at first it was a jackal. The trackers had keener eyes, however, and whispered 'Kotiya.' Before I could exchange my rifle for the shotgun and jump out of the jeep, the leopard had bounded off the road and into the bushes on Abey's side of the car. Quickly grabbing my proffered shotgun, he leaped out, took a fast aim and fired. There was an immediate growl from the leopard and a commotion in the bushes as if the beast were tearing up the ground. The only way to have forced an entry into the thicket, then half dark, would have been on all fours, and that is no way to take on a wounded leopard. Regretfully we marked the place for an early return the following morning when the light would be better.

Scarcely had we left the leopard when we entered a dark

corridor of jungle bordered by giant trees whose branches almost met overhead. It was a place for bear and we half expected to see one. Isteven told us that a month before we came to Wilpattu, the head game-watcher had been charged by a she-bear, knocked down, had his shoulder bitten through and one of his fingers bitten off. The charge was completely unprovoked and the tracker unarmed. While we had these thoughts firmly in mind, the jeeps stuck fast in the mud and a major digging operation had to be performed. The men were just beginning to dig when there was a crash in the underbrush and a wild buffalo lumbered out into the trail and stood glowering at the stalled jeeps. Most buffaloes, since they are protected, are seldom dangerous, but old solitary bulls, grown sour and irritable, have been known to charge. Weighing about a ton and being well armed with long and sharp curved horns, the buffalo bull can, of course, make his charge just as lethal as he wishes. This old bull believed in coexistence, however, and even though he pawed the ground a bit and cast some baleful looks at us, he soon lumbered off into the jungle.

The drinks and meals one has in camp have always seemed the best to me. There is something about Scotch whisky as it steals over a tired frame that is little short of miracle water. The weariness drains away to be soon replaced by a serene sense of well-being. The ensuing dinner was a meal to be remembered: roast junglecock, curried dryfish, curried dhal, rice, curried potatoes, cabbage salad, pears and cream, followed by coffee. After this gargantuan meal we tumbled into bed and slept the sleep of the hunter, certainly the least inhibited rest known to man.

In the chill dawn, and the jungles of Ceylon can be both cold and damp, we drank hot coffee and piled into the jeeps to search for the leopard. The story of last evening's episode was clearly evidenced. The leopard had been hit, as the blood attested; the underbrush was torn

up in several well-defined areas. The SG slugs, with which my shotgun was loaded, are killing shot, but, making small holes, they are not as productive of blood as a soft-nosed rifle bullet which tears a large hole as it emerges. The trail dried up after a few hundred yards and, even though we combed the area for over an hour, we could find no more tracks of the leopard.

Early morning, as well as evening, is a time when the wild creatures of the jungle move around in the open. From ten to four, when the fierce sun of the tropics burns in the cobalt-blue sky, the meadows are generally empty. Even the snipe forsakes the marshy depressions and the myriads of other wild birds seek the shelter of the jungle. By late afternoon, the movements commence: imperial, bronze-wing and green pigeons begin their luscious dinner of milla berries and rocket up from their feasts with speed enough for any wing shots desired. Biggest of all tropical game birds is, of course, the peafowl. A full-grown cock will weigh twelve pounds and requires some fast and careful shooting. Apart from hunters, the full-grown peafowl has few enemies. Once in a blue moon a leopard or a jackal will make a successful spring, but the peafowl has such good eyesight that it is one of the most difficult birds to stalk.

Another source of excellent meat for the pot is the black-necked hare, *Lepus nigricollis* to the zoologist, *hawa* to the Sinhalese and *musal* to the Tamil. As an old beagler, however, I shot them with reluctance and could not help feeling, as they made their lightning broken-field runs, what fine sport they would show in front of hounds. As I have mentioned in previous pages, hare are hunted with beagles in Ceylon and show good sport, particularly in the high tea country where scent does not dry up as quickly as it does in the heat of the plains. These hare weigh about five pounds and have a curious diamond-shaped patch of short black hair on the nape.

Back at camp by ten, we bathed in the cool river, shaved, read, lunched and slept until three, when the afternoon's expedition was organized. Instead of hunting the flat park lands of the previous day, Chandra, Ernest, Isteven and I drove to the edge of a very different stretch of country. A land of great blackened outcroppings of granite rock and dense clumps of *nellu* bushes was that through which the trail took its tortuous way. Rocks are the favourite haunt of bear, and the tracker told us that this district was full of them. Evidences of them were everywhere. We saw ant-hills ripped open by their long claws and in the soft mud of the water-holes we found the spreading pad-marks. Once I heard movement in the green depths of the *nellu* thickets but was unable to see through to its cause. Perhaps it was a bear or perhaps a sambhur, one of the big brown deer of the jungle who love to feed on the tender shoots of these bushes.

Many of the rocky outcroppings hold pools, and the largest of these are named. We visited Mulla Galla, a long bath-shaped depression where springs feed the pool and water remains during the worst droughts. It is pools like these where the hunters wait during the dry season and to which the game, driven crazy by thirst, always comes. For some strange reason, game animals remain within the area of their birth and seldom leave it, even in times of starvation and drought. Careful examination of the rock showed that crude steps had been cut leading down to the pool, and carved rocks and bricks lying about indicated that the rock must at one time have been the site of a Buddhist temple.

Near the rock, the tracker showed us the ruined shell of a dagoba. This one, like so many of its vintage, had been broken open, undoubtedly by the Tamil invaders from southern India, and had had its treasure rifled. Down in its dim interior a huge talagoya (monitor lizard) glared up at us and shot out its little forked tongue.

The evening's shoot yielded nothing but a brace of hares. I could have had easy shots at a big axis doe and a half-grown sambhur buck, but since we did not need any more meat and neither carried a trophy, I let them bound off into the jungle. Disappointing as a virtually blank shoot is, the pleasure of being in the wilds is always the sportsman's paramount feeling, and as we sat down to one of Joseph's superb dinners, enthusiasm for the morrow was as high as usual.

Even though we brought along a great variety of canned meats, fish, etc., we looked on these store supplies in the light of necessary evils and did our best to live off the country. Joseph's second dinner was a triumph of jungle cooking. We had roast and curried axis buck, boiled and curried hare, spiced balls made of the chopped meat of both animals, and the usual fried rice and dhal. All of which fine meal was washed down with good American canned beer.

Sunday evening — somewhat of a day of rest even in the jungle — we decided to give the big animals a rest and concentrate on birds for the early expedition anyway. As I noted previously, the rains had only just ceased and the jungle was a medley of greens with every tree bearing its full complement of leaves. This made for difficult shooting, as the pigeons could not be seen on the branches and our only chance of bagging them was during their swift flights in the open between the trees. Despite the hazards, we collected a good bag and enjoyed an excellent luncheon of braised, roasted and curried pigeon and dove.

Walking home from the morning's shoot along the leafy aisles of the forest, I noticed some lovely little purple flowers. Isteven laughed when I asked their name and told me that they are called *val panella* and are greatly prized by old men. Pressed as to why only old men should like them, he finally admitted shyly that the plant is a potent aphrodisiac whose effectiveness is highly esteemed. The

flowers are evidently crushed into a paste which is then fried and served to hopeful grandfathers with their morning curry.

Another jungle flower with medicinal properties is the *ranawera*, a brilliant yellow bloom from which a tea-like concoction is brewed. Exactly what it is good for was apparently unknown to Isteven, but he assured me it was excellent for just about everything.

The next shoot had to be our last for the trip as rain had fallen heavily during the previous night and the trail, a marsh at best, was rapidly becoming an inland lake. For this final effort, the tracker said he would take me to the wildest section of the area — a great outcropping of rocks known as the Sina Galla. He added that it was famous for bear and sambhur and was also the favourite viewing-place for elephants. Starting well before dawn, we arrived at the limit of the jeepable trail just as dawn was breaking. The new day in the wilds is always an inspiring and wonderful event. The light, at first a pale pearl colour, steals over the eastern forests and then, as it grows stronger, changes to rose and yellow. Long before the sun is visible, the landscape takes form and it is then that the hunter has his best chance, for the deer and pig may still be at their night's grazing or rooting in the open. There are many birds visible but the paramount calls are the long eerie cries of the peafowl and the 'George Joyce' of the junglecock.

After some four miles of hard walking through fairly thick jungle, we suddenly broke out of the bush and found ourselves at the edge of the rocks, or rather a series of hog-backs rising perhaps four hundred feet each above the jungle floor. The slope was gentle and we found little difficulty in mounting slowly to the top. Then I knew why the elephant appreciated the view. The jungle in all its majesty lay spread beneath us like a vast green carpet. Far off on the horizon other granite outcroppings reared their black masses, but elsewhere the line of the trees was

unbroken except for here and there the gleam of pools or water-holes. That the summit was once the abode of man was shown by a curious carved inscription on the rock face. Written in old Sinhalese which Chandra could read, the message was said to be a record of a king's grant to the monastery of the rock and to record the acreage of the surrounding land which belonged to the monks. No question of losing or changing such a will. It is there for the ages.

Far down on the other side of the rock, where the line of the jungle began, I saw a movement and, training the 'scope on it, saw the antlers and head of a sambhur stag. It was a long shot — at least three hundred yards — and I saw the leaves jump at the stag's feet when I pressed the trigger. Another clean miss on a good head.

From the standpoint of trophies, the hunt was a failure, but since many things besides killing go into a jungle trip, none of us was more than mildly disappointed. There was the complete freedom from the obligations of civilization; the sure knowledge that one could not be reached on the telephone; and, best of all, the only dates we had to keep were with the animals. The tramping was just what the doctor ordered and I felt in the best shape I had been in since my last jungle trip six months previously.

The jungle is not everybody's cup of tea. Apart from the rather remote possibility that an old bear might charge on sight or a wounded leopard cause trouble, there are numerous smaller hazards that must be faced. The giant spider, six inches of dark brownish horror, is fairly common. The bite can be, but seldom is, lethal. Scorpions are also unpleasant jungle dwellers. There are two varieties, but the five-inch, blackish-coloured stinger is the more common. For some unknown reason he prefers empty shoes, and it is always wise to turn them upside down before putting one's feet in. By far the most dangerous of the insect-reptile group, however, are the wild wasps of the low country

forests. Known as *debera*, these outsize, golden-coloured insects do not like the scent of humans and attack anyone who comes near their melon-shaped hives. So deadly are these wasps that a number of stings are said to contain the same amount of venom as that of the cobra.

There are both cobras and large vipers in the jungle, but both poisonous species have so many natural enemies that they are seldom seen. Not only does the peafowl and mongoose kill and eat them but the wild boar and talagoya also destroy them. Small pythons also serve as prey for the snake-killers, but a full-grown python, averaging over fifteen feet, has nothing to fear but man and the elephant.

Our sorrow at leaving this wild and lovely land was doubled by the knowledge that twelve thousand acres of the intermediate zone of Wilpattu East had recently been excised and will soon be surveyed for colonization. Animals, unfortunately, do not have the vote.

Chapter XI

GUNS AND GAME

To quote Mr. Jorrocks, 'A red coat doesn't make a fox-hunter', and likewise, the possession of fine firearms doesn't produce the trophies, but both refinements contribute greatly to the pleasures of hunting and shooting. The analogy stops there, however, for a pink coat can't save a life and a good gun certainly can. A strong case can be made (to oneself, if not to one's wife) that the best rifle or shotgun on the market is not a luxury; it is life insurance.

Back in 1935, when I was shooting in French Indo-China, I was asked by the authorities at Dalat to attend the funeral of two fellow Americans. They were young army officers from Manila who had taken their leave in Annam and, despite the warnings of almost everyone, insisted on hunting gaur with ·30 army rifles. The gaur or sladang is the largest bovine on earth. Standing six feet at the shoulder and weighing nearly a ton, the old bulls are capable of pressing home a charge that sends full-grown tigers scurrying out of their way. Reconstructed, the tragedy happened this way. The gaur — a big bull from his slot-marks — had back-tracked, hidden in the jungle until the two lieutenants and their tracker passed, and then charged them from behind. Both rifles were found to have been fired and the bull may even have been hit, but there is no stopping power in small-calibre bullets. He caught both men on his horns, tossed them and then stamped them into the ground.

The incident made a profound impression on me, for I had just killed a gaur with my ·405 Winchester and was

The gaur tossed the two men on his horns

amazed to see how much lead he took before he dropped. I put four shots into his shoulder at fifty yards, but he did not fall dead for another hundred yards. He was not coming at me, but if he had been the four 300-grain bullets, with a total shock force of more than five tons, would not have stopped him. Then and there I decided that, even though I could not afford a new best-quality rifle, I was

going to invest immediately in a second-hand one. I was not able to buy a good second-hand English rifle in Saigon, but I rented a Jeffery ·450 double and, even though it had seen many years' service and the lands were worn, it served me well during many months in the jungles of Indo-China.

All the best rifles are not made in England but there is no doubt that the great majority of them are made there. The professional hunters of Africa and Asia invariably buy best-quality British rifles and would certainly not pay the tariff if they did not consider such firearms a vital part of their equipment. A few good medium and heavy rifles are produced in America, but there is little market for them as there are virtually no animals in North America which cannot be safely handled with small-calibres. Jim Bond, the well-known Alaskan hunter, uses a ·300 Weatherby Magnum, and Charles Seldon, one of the famous bear hunters of the Territory, killed over eighty Alaskan brown bears with a ·256 Mannlicher.

While there are various ways of classifying rifles, I believe that the most logical is that delineated by Sir Gerald Burrard in his *Notes on Sporting Rifles*. He defines large-bore rifles as those with a calibre of not less than ·450. Heavy medium bores: less than ·450 but not less than ·400. Medium bores: less than ·400 but not less than ·318. Small bores: calibres less than ·318. He classifies magnum medium-bore rifles as those which develop a muzzle velocity of 2,500 feet per second or more, and magnum small-bore rifles as those which also develop 2,500 feet per second or more. He defines a light game rifle as one which develops a muzzle energy of less than 1,500 foot-pounds or fires a bullet of less than 50 grains in weight.

In Ceylon, where I have done most of my big-game shooting for the past two years, a heavy rifle is not a necessity unless one is after rogue elephant. My favourite gun for shooting in the Island has been a ·318 Westley-Richards. Weighing only 7½ pounds and developing a muzzle energy

of nearly 3,000 foot-pounds with the 180-grain bullet, the ·318 is plenty heavy enough for bear and wild boar and not too heavy for sambhur or axis deer. I have a four-power lightweight German telescope mounted on this rifle which can be rapidly detached if necessary.

I also possess an 8 mm. (·315) Mannlicher-Schonauer which I bought years ago at an auction of the effects of Florenz Ziegfeld, the producer of the Follies. A carbine model of 1908, this little rifle has served me well under all kinds of conditions. There is, of course, a great deal of difference in the cost of a Mannlicher and a Westley-Richards — the former selling for about a quarter of the price of the latter — and there is no question as to the ·318 being the better rifle.

It is only when one is hunting dangerous game that the possession of a best-quality heavy rifle becomes really important. John Taylor, the author and white hunter, had a shattering experience when armed with a cheap 10·75 mm. rifle of German origin. He had closed with a large herd of elephant in the long grass of the Angoni Plateau in Portuguese East Africa and suddenly spotted a magnificent tusker standing broadside twenty feet away. He threw up his rifle and pressed the trigger. The only result was a click. Furiously working his bolt, he pressed the trigger again and got — another click. Subsequent examination showed that the first click had been a misfire (due to cheap continental ammo) and the second was caused by a break of the magazine spring. Not a nice experience in the midst of a big herd of elephants in long grass.

The incident is not exceptional. Colonel St. Alden, a planting friend of mine in Burma, had the fright of his life when his old 10·75 mm. (·423) Mauser jammed. He had just shot a tiger from a machan and, having waited for some fifteen minutes and believing the beast quite dead, had climbed down and walked up to the tiger. He was an experienced hunter but forgot to throw a new cartridge

into the breech before approaching the big cat. When he was within ten feet of it the tiger bounded up, roared and charged. Wrenching open the bolt he tried to slam a new cartridge into the chamber, only to have the mechanism jam. The tiger luckily had been hit hard the first time and died in the act of attacking him. Even then the weight of its charge knocked St. Alden over and gave him a severe bruising.

I have shot tiger in both India and Indo-China and am a firm believer in a heavy double-barrelled rifle firing a cartridge with an impressive amount of what Taylor, in his good book *Big Game and Big Game Rifles*, calls 'knock-out value'. Although Taylor computed these values primarily to apply to solid bullets used against massive-boned animals such as buffalo and elephant, they are just as valid against the big cats. A big male tiger can weigh five hundred pounds and is capable of springing twenty feet through the air. Shock is what is wanted and sufficient shock to stop the tiger — even though momentarily — no matter where you hit him.

Taylor thinks that 50 knockout values are the very least that a beginner or even the average occasional sportsman should use on dangerous game. No rifle with a bore of less than ·425 fits this category. The knockout value of the Mauser 10·75 mm. (·423), mentioned above, is 46·1; that of my old ·405 Winchester only 38·2; and even that of a Jeffery ·400 is under the safety limit with 49·1. With this premise in mind I purchased a Westley-Richards ·425 double rifle and have never had cause to regret my decision to buy it.

There are many advantages in the double rifle. All big-game hunters know that it is the second shot that counts, and with a double you can get off the second blast with a minimum of time and a complete absence of noise. The metallic clamour emanating from the manipulated bolt of even the best-oiled magazine rifle is bound to be heard

by the hunted animal, and when that animal is a dangerous one noise is a thing to avoid. Another great advantage of the double, especially when hunting dangerous game, is the ease with which one can bring it to bear. Almost all magazine rifles are operated by means of a bolt, and as it is difficult to manipulate the bolt while the rifle is being hoisted to the shoulder, time is lost before it can be put into action.

But perhaps the most important advantage of a double over a magazine rifle is its balance. The single-barrelled rifle simply does not have the concentration of weight between the hands that a double enjoys. To quote old Jorrocks again, 'Any quad will get you there; but the 'igh-mettled 'unter is more fun'. You pay for the pleasure; the double by a good maker sells for two to three times the price of a good magazine rifle.

The novice is apt to think that all the maker has to do to turn out a double rifle is to mount two rifle barrels parallel to each other. This is far from the case. The barrels must be adjusted so that when the right barrel is fired the recoil will not throw the muzzle to the right. The firing of the left barrel tends to throw the muzzle to the left. Accordingly, the barrels must be so set that their axes slightly converge. The degree of convergence varies with different loads and individual rifles. The only method of producing a perfect shooting double is by trial and error, and yet the famous British makers turn out doubles with which a grouping of three inches can be attained at one hundred yards. The infinite patience and skill required to regulate the position of the barrels accounts for an important part of the high cost of these rifles.

Many of the professional hunters in Africa prefer to have their heavy doubles built without automatic ejectors. They object to the noise inherent in the ejection of the spent shells. Personally, I like the automatic ejectors and feel that in most situations the noise is more than compensated by the faster loading of the rifle. Professionals

also prefer their doubles without automatic safeties and cite numerous cases where hunters have lost their lives through forgetting to push forward the safety after reloading their rifles. Again I don't agree with them. If one is used to a shotgun, one unconsciously pushes the safety forward before firing, and since a double rifle is the spitting image of a shotgun, even to the dual triggers and location of the safety, I see no reason to forget to release the safety catch when using the rifle.

A very useful weapon for following up wounded tiger or lion is not a rifle at all but a smooth-bore double-barrelled gun with just a few inches of rifling toward the end of the tubes. Known as a *paradox*, this gun can fire both shot and ball and is lethal at short ranges. The 12-bore paradox magnum is especially effective against soft-skinned, dangerous game and, weighing only about eight pounds, can also be used as a shotgun for bird shooting.

For shooting in Ceylon, however, the ordinary shotgun is quite sufficient. I have a Parker that my father gave me thirty years ago and which I have used on everything from leopard to snipe; a 12-bore, twenty-eight-inch-barrel gun, without automatic ejectors, it has given me a lifetime of service and shows no signs of weakening. The Parker is one of the few really good shotguns made in America, and unfortunately is no longer being produced.

There is one trouble inherent in using a 12-bore shotgun in the jungle: it makes a devil of a lot of noise. Even my little Fox 20-bore is apt to frighten everything for quite a distance, so if one's purpose in using a scatter-gun is only to bag some birds for the pot, the risk of driving away important game is much too great. The solution is a ·22 Hornet with a telescopic sight. So accurate are these little rifles that it is quite possible to shoot a peafowl in the head at a hundred yards and yet the report is so inaudible that other birds may not even know you have been shooting at it.

I also own a Remington automatic shotgun and a Winchester pump-gun which I find useful for duck, especially in the Far East where the bags are apt to be large, but frankly I don't like either gun. Artillery rather than shotguns, these heavy multi-shot weapons have nothing but their low costs to recommend them. In America the game laws force the owners of such shotguns to insert balks, so that only three shots can be fired before reloading. Incidentally I was using my Winchester on the night the leopard came to my kill at Bagara. I had loaded the magazine but had forgotten to insert a cartridge in the chamber. The result was a click and a lost leopard. Such a situation could never have arisen with a double-barrelled gun.

Shotguns and even paradoxes are only useful for close shooting and their main function, where big game is concerned, is a subsidiary one. The rifle is the primary arm and the sportsman, like the wife-hunter, is always yearning for the perfect 'all-round' rifle. Reams have been written on behalf of a dozen fine rifles which men wise in the ways of the jungles and the plains feel meet this definition. The late Marquis Guidon La Valle, my hunting companion in Indo-China, who had hunted in Africa, India and Indo-China, swore by his double 450/400 Purdey. He said it is up to the largest and toughest big game in the world and handles like a shotgun. Other popular candidates are the Rigby ·416 magazine rifle, the ·404 Jeffery and my ·425 double Westley-Richards.

Weight, however, especially in the steaming jungles of Asia, is an important factor in the choice of an all-round rifle. Remember, you will have to carry your heavy rifle at least part of the time yourself. My ·425 weighs 11 pounds and I consider this far too much weight to lug around in the tropics except on the back of an elephant. Purdey's double weighs 10¼ pounds and even the two magazine rifles weigh nine pounds or more each.

The question is, therefore, how can one acquire a high degree of killing power in a relatively light rifle? The answer, I believe, is the ·375 magnum built by Holland & Holland. The magazine version weighs only 8½ pounds and yet the rifle is designed to take three different weights of bullet, suitable for virtually all types of game. These bullets, moreover, have an extraordinarily high striking velocity, with a consequently devastating effect on the animal hit. Taylor said of this rifle, 'The killing power of the ·375 magnum is something that can only be properly appreciated by one who has used it on a large variety of game over a long period of time. Excluding head shots, which miss the brain and therefore only stun the animal, I have never known an animal brought down by this rifle to get to its feet again. It seems to have a paralysing effect.'

I only recently purchased a ·375 but have shot with it on many occasions and it is, without hesitation, my choice for the 'all-round' rifle. I might add that Hollands' new ·375 magnum can be fitted with a vari-power 'scope, which can be regulated to give the viewer all degrees of magnification between 2½ and 6 power. Loaded with the 235-grain soft-nosed bullet, it is an excellent rifle for all types of Indian and Ceylon deer, while for Himalayan bear and the common sloth bear of low-country India and Ceylon, the 270-grain bullet is certainly an effective load. The 300-grain bullet is quite big enough for tiger, sladang or elephant even though its knockout value is only 40·1. The reason for this exception to the rule lies in the rifle's fantastically high striking velocity.

I have quoted the opinions of some well-known hunters in the above, but the fact remains that the two most famous hunters of modern times — Colonel Jim Corbett of India and Colonel Patterson of Africa — used very light rifles against the most dangerous animals known to man, namely man-eaters. Jim Corbett, whom I had the honour of meeting twenty years ago in Naini Tal, used a ·275 to

destroy many of the grim killers listed in his classic tales of the Kumaon Hills. He repeatedly faced tigers which had killed and eaten dozens of people, with a rifle whose knockout value is so small that Taylor does not even list it. In any case it is less than 20.

Colonel Patterson waged war against the man-eating lions of Tsavo with a scarcely heavier ·303, whose knockout value is given as 19·2, the lowest in Taylor's list.

But unless you are aspiring to the honours and horrors of a Corbett or a Patterson, I strongly advise a heavy rifle for the big cats, and the more you pay for it, the better it will be.

Chapter XII

HOUNDS IN THE HILLS

DEEP in the mountains of Ceylon lies a remote valley where the cry of hounds still echoes on the trail of sambhur and wild pig and where the ancient art of venery continues to be held in high esteem. I refer to the Mansfield Hunt and the grand sport shown me by its Master, Charles Patterson of Allagolla Estate, Uda Pussellawa, in the province of Uva, who with his brother Hubert carries on the traditions of Sir Samuel Baker and the other great hunters of Ceylon. There are a few small packs of hounds still hunting in the low country but the Mansfield is the only hunt now in existence in the mountains, the traditional site of the noble sport.

The Madulla Valley, where the Pattersons have constructed a hunting lodge, lies only about three miles from Allagolla — if one could fly down the mountain to it. But by the road and trail the distance is more than ten. Packed in a Land Rover, we chugged down the hairpin turns of the tea roads until even these petered out and we walked several miles over overgrown mountain trails, crossed a unique hanging bridge over the roaring flood of the Halgranoya, and finally climbed through an emerald-green paddy-field to the bungalow. We had begun our trek at the 4,500-foot altitude and were now down to the 1,800.

The Hunter's Inn, as it is called, is exactly the kind of retreat that pleases the sportsman. On the porch hang a mixed bag of heads and horns that any master might be proud of. The central piece is a huge sambhur head,

flanked by a brace of spotted deer and further set off by the delicate masks of two little red deer. There are the massive boar heads, whose scimitar-sharp tushes give wicked evidence of their erstwhile prowess. There are two grinning leopard masks and a great display of sporting pictures, ranging from faded portraits of long-dead hounds and huntsmen to relatively modern pictures of the chase. Three comfortable double bedrooms, with attached baths, and a kitchen make up the living quarters. Meals and drinks are served on the porch or out under the spreading branches of a big flamboyant on the terrace overlooking the paddy-field and the river. An unexpected luxury is electricity, generated by the ingenious use of power from a mountain stream. Built in 1925, the bungalow is still in good shape.

The party consisted of the Master, his wife Lillian, Alexander McIntyre and Conway Davis, planters of the district and keen members of the Mansfield, and me. A more congenial group could not have been assembled. All of us were genuinely interested in natural history and the lore of the jungles. I was particularly fascinated to hear that the Madulla Valley is the home of two famous devils, Punchi and Locu Kiriappo. Locu now has no power, owing to the fact that one night he boasted to a cattle-driver that he was able to make himself the size of an areca nut or as big as a bo tree. The cattle-driver dared Locu to make himself small enough to jump in the little metal box the driver kept for his lime. Locu did and the driver snapped the lid shut. Punchi, however, is still at large and can make things very rough for strangers. He has a habit of confronting them at night, asking if they are new to the valley and, if they say they are, squeezing them to death. It is not hard to spot Punchi, for he always travels with a vanguard of bees.

Only a scattering of families live in the valley. Malaria, years ago, decimated it and today only a handful of peasants cultivate the meagre *chenas* and paddy-fields. Few of the

inhabitants have ever been as far away as Nuwara Eliya and none have seen the sea or been to Colombo. Without exception, they are deeply attached to Charlie, and for good reason. Not only does he employ all the males as beaters for his hunts, but he presents them with virtually all the fruits of it. A big boar weighs upwards of two hundred pounds and means meat for everyone. No wonder the peasants' hands were pressed together in salute as we passed; a mark of respect that was sincere and heartfelt.

We left camp in the half-light of a misty dawn and followed hounds down an overgrown trail for about a mile along the Madulla Valley. Below us the torrent of the Halgranoya roared down its rocky course and over us towered the green slopes of Allacolazallo and Muthetathema, two four-thousand-foot peaks that guard the approaches to the valley. A wilder and more inaccessible spot would be hard to find in all Ceylon.

Davis and I took up a post on a saddle-back, about five hundred feet above the floor of the valley, while Charlie and Mac stationed themselves farther along the ridge. When we were all in position, Charlie blew his horn, and the silver notes echoing off the cliffs told Valaithan, the huntsman, that he could cast his hounds. He was hunting seven couple and it seemed only a moment before the pack broke into a chorus of music that gladdened our hearts. They had found and were running a breast-high scent. A moment later we heard a savage grunt, followed immediately by a yelp of pain. The quarry was a boar and evidently a large enough one to inflict punishment.

The boar took off up the mountain and we saw the ripple of jungle grass as he made his way up a near-by ravine. I clocked the run from the moment of find; it was just under forty minutes when the report of shotguns from the height told us that the boar had been sighted. Bringing the glasses to bear, I saw a huge black form somersault in the air and crash downhill. The hounds went

The hounds went crazy and we knew the end was near

crazy and we knew the end was near. It took two more shots, however, finally to dispatch the old boar.

The victory was a costly one. Four hounds were badly cut up. Chutney, a pretty young bitch, was slashed across her back, the vicious tushes just missing her spine. Sailor, one of the grandmothers of the pack, also took a severe beating on her ribs and shoulders. Ranger and Sinbad, two young entries, were badly cut in the flanks. When it is remembered that the average old boar is armed with five-inch tushes and weighs seven times more than a beagle, the inequality of the contest is apparent. It takes real courage to close with a wild pig and Charlie's pack deserved full marks.

By seven the sun was above the peaks and the valley lay bathed in a flood of amber light. Hounds were cast again, this time farther up the valley, and again found almost immediately. Charlie shouted up that it was another boar, and I clocked the beginning of the chase. Forty-seven minutes later this boar was also shot. Not as large as the first, he was still a formidable customer.

It was then past nine and, as scent was drying up and

we had a fine bag, we called it a day and started home. The boars, their feet lashed to poles, were borne triumphantly along by six men each. Charlie always distributes the flesh to the peoples of the valley and there is never a lack of labour to bring in the quarry. Back at camp, we had a well-earned beer and proceeded to the kennels to see that the hounds were made comfortable and the wounded bound up. William, Charlie's major-domo, then did an excellent job of butchering, saving me the head of the largest boar for mounting purposes.

After a fine curry lunch and a long sleep, we walked to the river and watched the birds. We saw the gorgeous paradise flycatcher, called the *redi hora*, or 'cotton thief', on account of the cock's long tail; the charming little painted thrush and the black-headed oriole. Near the bridge we heard jungle crows, barbets and the 'George Joyce' cry of the junglecock. Conway pointed out the 'sensitive plant', a curious little fellow that pulls in its leaves and goes to sleep at four in the afternoon and will also retreat on contact with a foreign body. Patna oaks, kumbuks and bo trees lined the river and overhung deep pools where mahseer were rumoured to lurk.

Poor old Melody did not return to the kennels and Valaithan went back to find her. For hours we heard the faint sweet notes of his horn as he blew on the summits, but Melody never answered. She was an old bitch and tired. Perhaps her heart simply gave out or perhaps one of the giant pythons that inhabit the dank ravines of the valley caught her in its coils. Charlie says he has lost hounds before and is sure the great snakes get them. Leopards are also very fond of beagles but they seldom come to the valley.

The next morning's draw was farther down the valley, under the frowning cliffs of Kimbulla Gala, literally 'croc rock' owing to the peak's resemblance to an inverted crocodile. A light rain was falling and the mist curled upwards around the peaks like a lazy dragon. Climbing several

hundred feet above the road, Conway and I and our two trackers took up a position on a little shelf of land where an old bo tree gave protection from the rain and clumps of red and yellow lantana bushes lent colour to the prevailing green of the jungle hillside.

Again, hounds found immediately after being cast, and again, to their sorrow, the quarry turned out to be pig. This time it was an old sow who bit three hounds so badly that they had to be retired from the hunt. Out of the original seven couple, eight hounds were now *hors de combat* and, not wishing to take chances on further reducing the pack, Charlie called it a day and we went home. Injured hounds were immediately treated with margossa oil, the excellent medication that is distilled from the margossa fruit.

That evening, as the whisky passed and a new moon rose over the dark summits of the mountain behind the bungalow, Charlie told me some of the history of the Mansfield Hunt. He and his brother, Hubert, started the pack with a bobbery assembly of local hounds in 1900. By 1915 they had become so interested that they sent to England and imported a draft from the Duke of Beaufort. These big white hounds lent stamina to the pack but proved entirely incapable of coping with the rugged terrain. The brothers decided that the sixteen-inch beagle was far and away the best type of hound for the country and have since then maintained hounds of this variety and size. The present pack consists of about ten couple of lemon and whites. I was particularly impressed with Sailor and Warrior, offspring of the lamented Melody.

The season opens on November 1 and lasts until April 28. Hounds go out an average of fifteen times per season; a really excellent record in view of the injuries the pack sustains from boar and the rough mountain terrain. In addition to pig, the pack hunts sambhur, red deer or barking deer, and spotted deer. The sambhur, locally known as

elk, is really the favourite quarry and it was to hunt these great brown stags that hunting with hounds was inaugurated in Ceylon.

In the early days, stag and boar were killed by the huntsman with a knife, after the pack had brought the quarry to bay, and the grand *chasseur* of these intrepid nimrods was Sir Samuel Baker, who maintained a conglomerate pack at Nuwara Eliya from 1851 to 1855. Consisting of pure-blooded foxhounds from England, kangaroo hounds from Australia, Scotch deerhounds and odd mixtures of the above, the pack was bred for only one purpose — to run down and then hold the quarry until his arrival with the lethal blade.

The jungles of upland Ceylon are dense and Sir Samuel's three-pound killing knife was used to cut his way through matted brush, skin out the trophies and later to fashion his simple huts. The blade was only a foot long, two inches wide and double-edged three inches from the point. It was made specially for him by Mr. Paget of Piccadilly, London. So keen were the cutting edges that he could slice one of the old trade pennies in two without blunting the knife.

While boar were often killed, the primary game consisted of sambhur deer and the smaller barking deer. I was once charged by a wounded sambhur in Indo-China and have a healthy respect for its courage, even after receiving a slug in the shoulder from a ·405 Winchester. Sir Samuel accounted for 138 sambhur, 14 wild hog and 8 red deer during one two-year period when he kept a diary of his hunting.

Dangerous as the sambhur is at bay, he cannot hold a candle to the wild boar, and Sir Samuel's pack took heavy losses from the big tuskers. Like their cousins of the mainland, the Ceylon boar runs straight for only a short distance before he turns or 'jinks' and leads a wild chase amongst the gullies and ravines until finally he chooses a

dense cover where he is protected behind and, if possible, on his two sides also. Then, his little red eyes blazing and his razor-sharp tusks champing like the knives in a sausage machine, he faces the pack.

Sir Samuel had two types of hunting hounds: those which brought the quarry to bay and the 'seizers' that actually attacked the boar or sambhur and held him till their master could get in with his knife. He could not train the dogs for the 'seize', and many brave and foolhardy hounds were killed attempting a head-on attack. A few highly intelligent hounds learned to jump over the boar's back, seize him by the ear on the opposite side in a manner that would turn the boar's head up in a contrary direction and thus save themselves from the raking thrust of the tusks.

The courage necessary for this type of hunting can be imagined when it is remembered that the jungles are sometimes so thick that it is impossible to see more than three feet away and, unless Sir Samuel's hounds held the boar fast, he would often find himself facing the infuriated beast.

In his hunting classic *Wild Beasts and Their Ways* (Macmillan, 1898), Sir Samuel describes a typical hunt of a hundred years ago:

My narrowest escape occurred upon the hills of Nuwara Eliya in a jungle of dense bamboo grass. Although this tangled mass is termed 'grass', it is merely a species of bamboo which grows at an altitude of about 6,500 to 7,000 feet, in a climate too cold for its complete development. Instead of forming a hollow cane, it extends in long and thin creeping stems, entwined together, forming a mass which can be broken through only with the greatest difficulty.

A large boar had turned to bay after a short run within a jungle composed of this dangerous vegetation.

Having broken my way with great exertion until I was within five or six yards of the 'bay', I holloaed the dogs on. Two powerful long-legged hounds immediately sprang from

my side, and in a few moments I heard the peculiar angry sounds which told me that the boar was seized. I tore my way through the tangled jungle, and almost immediately found myself in the presence of a large boar exactly facing me. Without a moment's hesitation, it made a supreme effort to attack; its charge was so furious and sudden that, being unexpected by the dogs, they lost their hold, and for a moment the boar was free. I instinctively jumped upon one side, as the brute rushed at me, and delivered a tremendous cut with the heavy knife across its back, just behind the shoulder. At the same moment, a very powerful bitch named Lena had recovered her hold upon the boar's thigh. . . . This large boar fell dead! It never moved a muscle.

In those days I could hit tolerably hard, but the effect of this blow was so instantaneous that I was almost incredulous when I saw the body of the boar lying at my feet, cut half-way through. The knife had struck downwards, as the boar had passed at full speed; the body, being stretched through the weight of the bitch that had seized the thigh, gave way at once before the keen edge of the heavy blade. The spine was cut clear through, and the knife had passed through the vitals.

In addition to being a great hunter, Sir Samuel was a noted explorer. Born in London in 1821, he spent his early years on the 2,000-acre estate of his family and learned early to use a rifle and ride a horse. Having the means to travel, he went to Ceylon in 1846 and remained there for eight years, shooting elephant and buffalo as well as hunting with his hounds. In 1861 he went to Africa and spent the next four years exploring the upper Nile, in the course of which expedition he discovered and named Lake Albert N'yanza. He hunted later in the Rocky Mountains of North America and bagged wapiti, bison, grizzly and mountain sheep. Still later, he journeyed to India, where he added tiger, rhinoceros and buffalo to his total of big-game trophies.

Sir Samuel was a student of rifles and, in his seven books of big-game hunting, there are constant references to the types of guns he used and the charges that went into

them. Those were the days of muzzle-loaders and most of them were single-shot weapons. If one missed, there was no second chance ; and the fact that few hunters were injured indicates the care with which they shot their big game.

Physically, Sir Samuel was a very big and powerful man. In a sketch of his life, published recently in Whelen's excellent two-volume work *Hunting Big Game*, the case is cited where two of his native guides became obstreperous. Catching each by the back of the neck, he held them at arms' length, feet dangling, and bumped their heads together until they 'became good'.

I have not read all his works but I can recommend *Eight Years in Ceylon* and *Wild Beasts and Their Ways* as two of the best adventure books one could read.

After Sir Samuel's day, hunting was firmly established in the highlands, and one of the keenest sportsmen to follow him was Charles Heneage Bagot, a planter, who hunted his own pack from 1890 to the turn of the century. Known as the Horton Plains Hunt, the pack was taken over in 1906 by C. H. Sparkes and R. K. Maitland. The hounds met on Sundays. Sambhur was hunted and killed by knifing, although a rifle was carried for boar. After the First World War, the Horton Plains Hunt became a subscription pack and lasted until the beginning of the Second World War. The hounds were seventeen-inch harriers.

Through the kindness of Charles Bagot, son of Charles H. Bagot, I was able to examine the former's game books. The first entry was on January 5, 1890, and noted that he drew Molapola with a pack of thirteen couple and killed a hind. On March 7 of the same year, he ran for three-quarters of an hour without a check and killed in the river. In 1895, a fierce brute of a boar killed Vesta and Ballet-girl and wounded five other hounds. Later the same year, a tic polonga (Russell's viper) bit five hounds, of which two died. Among the distinguished guests who hunted

with Mr. Bagot were H.R.H. Prince Louis d'Orléans and H.R.H. the Grand Duke Cyril, later Tsar of all the Russias.

For a vivid report of hunting in the old days, I quote from a story of Hubert Patterson's about a hunt of the Mansfield Hounds on February 7, 1912:

It took us some time to get down the very steep approach to the river but eventually, after a grim struggle, we reached the bay where the gallant stag, having taken up his position in a large deep pool, was keeping the hounds away by pounding each one as it swam out to him. It was a grand sight, never to be easily forgotten. The roar of the hounds baying and the rushing waters added to the effectiveness of that scene.

The seizers came up, after a pause of fifteen minutes or so, and as soon as they were released, Satan and Spring made a leap at the stag which was soon well held by the ear and nose. The pack instantly closed in on him, and it was difficult to stick him, but a dark red patch on the water indicated that my pal's knife had gone into the gallant beast's heart.

He soon disappeared under the water, the end of a magnificent run which started at 6.45 and finished at five minutes past one o'clock. Here the lunch-box arrived with whisky, soda and a good supply of sandwiches and we all fell to it. The morning run being well discussed, it was now time to cut the beast up and move homeward bound.

Hugh Kennedy, one of the old-time planters, expressed it in verse:

Farewell to the jungles and patnas,
  Farewell to the old Horton Plains,
A Garden of Eden in sunshine,
  A place to avoid in the rains.
When striving for trout in the river,
  When struggling after the pack,
I have lived a man's life in your spaces,
  Great days which will never come back.

My next day with hounds took place in the Wariyapola district of the North Western Province where William Abeysekera persuaded his friend, D. A. de Silva, to hunt his hounds for us.

In Ceylon one must purchase a hunting licence for each individual shoot, and Mr. Arulpragasam, Government Agent of the Province, kindly invited us to pick up our permits at his seat at Kurunegala, some sixty miles from Colombo, and have tea with him before we went on to Abey's estate.

The road from Colombo to the provincial capital turns through the heart of the best coconut-producing areas, and one gains altitude imperceptibly till the freshening airs remind the traveller that he is over three hundred feet up towards the foot-hills of the Kandyan plateau. The residence of the Government Agent is a charming old house built over a hundred years ago by the British on the site of one of the palaces of the Kandyan kings. Bo and mara trees stud the lawn, and behind the house rises the great gneiss rock formation from which the town takes its name. Kurunegala means 'rock, not so little' and the massive camel-backed boulder is certainly not inadequately described.

Leaving the genial Mr. Arulpragasam, who gave us the freedom of the jungles, we drove another twenty miles to Alankaragoda Estate, which means 'beautiful place' in Sinhalese and is the name of Abey's estate. Despite the fact that he carved the estate out of jungle just three and a half years ago, the excellent road, comfortable bungalow and well-tilled fields have the look of having been there a long time. The rapidity with which he was able to turn the wilderness into a home and working estate was largely due to his kindness to the inhabitants of the neighbouring village of Konotte. For the past three years the monsoon has been inadequate, and the villagers, except for Abey's generosity in providing work, would have starved. In return, they all worked hard on the estate.

The hounds would not meet until the day after our arrival, so Abey arranged for beaters from the village of Wadurasa to show us sport for the first morning's hunt.

Reminiscent of the Moi villages of Indo-China, where I spent so many happy months twenty years ago, the Sinhalese settlements of the back country are equally primitive. The dwellings are wattle and mud huts, situated in little clearings of gingali, green gram and millet. The main crop is paddy and, since paddy depends on water, every village must be near a tank or dammed depression from which they can irrigate their fields.

Panika, the leading citizen, welcomed us and, while the trackers and beaters were being rounded up, showed us round the village. Morals are sometimes practical in rural areas and we met two brothers who had a common wife. In fact, this was the second common wife they had enjoyed, the first having died in childbirth. Children are named after the elder brother but share equally in all other matters. On the porch of one of the huts was a tiny spider-like child and a really lovely-looking young mother of fourteen. She could not suckle the child, so was feeding him about four ounces of buffalo milk twice a day from a little bottle.

Quite apart from the eagerness of the trackers to please their old friend Abey, who has employed them for the past fifteen years, they have a real grievance against the big inhabitants of the jungle as they have to spend every night watching their meagre crops. A sambhur can tear up a plot of gingali in a few hours of moonlight feasting and a boar can play hell with the tender shoots of new paddy. This necessity for nightly guarding of the fields must work out well for the brothers — one of them is always away after sundown.

Finally, Ukkauwa, the head tracker, organized his beaters and, moving off several miles, we took up positions along a jungle trail with an interval of about a hundred yards between each of the four guns. The line of beaters then started through the jungle, and what a jungle it was! Thorn bushes, creepers and dry prickly grass made the job of forcing a way through a specially hard one for the

barefooted and nearly naked Sinhalese. They carried burning bundles of sheaves made from dried coconut flowers, and a few firecrackers to supplement their cries. There were about twenty in the line, ranging from five-year-old children, who were paid the equivalent of ten U.S. cents for the morning's work, to the old men who drew a rupee or about twenty cents. The head tracker and the village elder were both armed with ancient muzzle-loaders.

There is a feeling of excitement in a jungle beat that is hard to describe. Out of the green wall behind one may come a charging boar, a lunging sambhur or even a leopard. The hunters are hidden as much as possible and must be absolutely quiet while the beat is made so that the game is driven down the wind. Because of the beaters, moreover, it is only safe to shoot after the animal has emerged from the jungle and is crossing the trail in front of the guns.

The wild cries of the beaters, punctuated by the sharp crack of the firecrackers, drew nearer and I heard the pounding of heavy hooves. My wife and Rohini, who were stationed with me, edged nearer, and I slipped off the safety of my Remington automatic shotgun. I had loaded with SG chilled steel shot, somewhat larger than our BBs. Such shells do not have the penetration of a rifle but, in jungle shooting with beaters, it is a far safer charge to use and lethal at short ranges.

Whatever it was in the jungle refused to break cover and rushed away out of sight. Later, I heard that a herd of five axis deer and a brace of sambhur stag crossed the trail just round the bend from me. No pig were flushed. Subsequent drives resulted in the bagging by one of the trackers of a nice axis stag, but none of us had a shot. A spotted deer butchers down to over a hundred pounds of meat, however, so there was no chance we would go hungry.

Back at the estate, Loy Abeysekera produced a wonderful luncheon consisting of beef curry, coconut sambol (condiment), snake gourd curry (a delicious type of marrow), cabbage curry, mixed pickles, meat stew, bread and butter, and heaped platters of estate-produced unpolished rice. Abey grows his own coffee which I think equals any I ever drank.

Then we slept till the sun dropped behind the palms and it was time to observe the rite of the jungle god Devio. I mentioned in my previous accounts of shooting in the Wilpattu Reserves that we had no luck at all until we had made suitable representations to this ancient and powerful deity of the jungle. Since Penny Moore, Rohini and my daughter, Rene, were all about to be initiated into the Club, it seemed particularly fitting to introduce them to these mysteries.

Devio is a jealous god. One must burn a candle to him and offer coppers but, most important of all, believe implicitly in his ability to produce game. Scoffers fire many shots and find only the vanishing blood spoors of departed quarry. Accordingly, before supper, we filed out into the starlit night to a tree where a little shrine had been made by tacking a tin container to a kahta tree, the tree sacred to hunters. A single candle guttered in the little alcove with a pile of old coins laid before it. The initiates bowed their heads. Abey led the procession, and was followed by Chandra, as vice-president, me as secretary and bag recorder, and Bryant Moore and the members. Last of all came the three to be initiated.

The actual ceremony is simple and stems from the dim beginnings of animist belief on the Island. The hunters press their palms together and bow three times to the god. In a few words, they ask for luck in the morning and then stand quietly for a moment while repeating inaudibly the prayer of good hunting. (If one says it aloud, the jungle demons may hear it and work against the Devio.) From

the porch, where we gathered for drinks, we could still see the distant glow of the candle in the shrine. After many years of hunting, in many countries, I have a real faith in the jungle gods. They are part and parcel of the wilds and who can say it is not wise to propitiate them ?

In the chill dawn of the following morning, the hounds arrived with their owner, a fine old gentleman who has bred his pack for the past twenty-five years and is justly proud of their ability to hunt the big game of Ceylon. He has eleven couple in kennels but only drafted four couple of his best for the morning's sport. They consisted of three pure-blooded harriers, three pure-bred beagles, one Indian-bred foxhound from the famous Coty pack and a cross-bred foxhound harrier. Despite the great difference in size, all the hounds ran well together and, like the hounds of France, were beautifully tuned in voice, with the mellow cry of the foxhounds and harriers blending with the shrill yap of the beagles.

Dr. Drogo Austin, a leading surgeon of Colombo and owner of a pack of beagles himself, also showed up with his family for the day's sport, and by the time the stars were beginning to pale, we left the plantation and headed for a big stretch of jungle about ten miles away. The plan was to station the guns along one side of the cover and then send several more guns in with the hounds to drive the quarry out. As I mentioned above, the real fun is to follow hounds, but the jungle in this section is very dense and much as I would have liked to plunge into it with the Master, I decided against it and took up a station on a small hill where I could listen to the music and perhaps get a shot at anything breaking cover.

Tauser, the largest of the pure-blood harriers, soon had a line going and, the pack honouring, they charged through the brambles with a strong scent. De Silva told me he was able to tell, by the cry, whether the game being hunted was pig or deer but I did not know the pack well enough to

distinguish this fine point. After perhaps half an hour of grand music, the tempo of the cry rose perceptibly and was almost immediately followed by the sharp crack of a gun. Two more shots ensued and then quiet. A good axis stag was tagged.

Moving to another stretch of jungle, the pack was again thrown in and soon had another hot scent in front of them. This time there was an excellent chance that pig was the quarry, as the area being drawn was said to be full of them and their tracks were everywhere in the dry earth. Luck was again with those who followed the pack and another brace of deer was soon added to the bag. Pig were seen by the Master but they proved too smart to move out of the almost impenetrable bushes bordering the dry streams.

Only one sambhur, the real monarch of hill country, was seen, but hounds were running the axis deer when he broke cover. Unlike the spotted deer, which seldom if ever come to bay and turn on the pack, the sambhur stag will show great courage when cornered and, unless hounds are careful, may inflict deadly wounds with his antlers and sharp hooves.

By noon, scent was almost dried up, so, calling it a day, we returned to the bungalow for iced whisky and soda and another of Loy's fine curry luncheons. I had not fired a shot but the fun of a hunting trip has really nothing to do with killing.

Lying on the cots before sleep claimed us, we talked of hounds and I learned that there are two other packs hunting this section of the Island. Noel Daniels has a pack of harriers with which he hunts pig and deer, and Lucian de Silva has a pack of six harriers, imported from Australia, that he has trained specially to hunt leopard. As the big cats are the traditional enemies of dogs and yearly kill thousands of them, there is a rough justice in this. The hounds, however, only bring the leopards to bay. One

tap of his claws would break their backs, and hounds soon learn to stay clear. The leopard is usually treed after a rather short run. The pack then bays the tree and de Silva comes up and shoots the leopard. He is reported to have accounted for fifteen in the past few years.

The leopard's fondness for dog meat will sometimes drive him to extremes of boldness. Some years ago, a friend in Nuwara Eliya was walking with his pet dachshund; the little fellow was only a few yards behind him when he heard a yelp of pain and turned round just in time to see a big leopard leap into the jungle with the dog in his mouth.

Most of the packs which hunt game in Ceylon have little hound blood in them, and I had a fine day in the far south behind a bunch of pariah dogs that could never appear on the flags at Peterborough but nevertheless produced some fine sport for us.

I was visiting the Gal Oya development scheme in the Eastern Province and was promised by Rodney Jonklaas, one of the officers of the project, that he would take me hunting. Needless to say, I was ready and waiting when Jonklaas came for me in a Land Rover and drove me to the home of D. A. P. Perera, a fine old Sinhalese *shikari* who owned the hounds and was only too happy to take me out after boar. He was born in Malaya and had shot tiger and sladang in the jungles of Perak before he returned to Ceylon in his old age. With his son and son-in-law, he worked in the machine shops of Gal Oya.

The pack consisted of five strictly local hounds. Somewhere far back in the dim ages of canine heredity there may have been some foxhonud or beagle blood in them, but they ran mute and only gave tongue when the quarry was cornered. They were named Blackie, Manapie, Sampson, Manager and Brownie. The Ceylon pig is an ugly brute. It weighs up to three hundred pounds and can inflict a nasty wound with its razor-sharp tusks. The native dogs

have learned long ago to surround the pig and keep it at bay but never to try and close in on a big boar.

We decided to draw the ridge between the Ronderdetervanen Tank and the Ampari Tank, and accordingly entered the jungle soon after crossing the bund of the latter tank. The going was far from easy; briars and thorns made progress slow and sometimes painful. Ticks, the little fiends of Ceylon, crawled up my boots and fastened in the soft flesh between my toes. The terrain was rough in the extreme and we were constantly climbing rock escarpments and then descending rapidly to muddy streams. My rubber soles had no purchase on the rocks and twice I took precipitate headers into the swamps below.

The hounds had been ranging along quietly on either side of us, when suddenly they all raced forward and, with a series of urgent yaps, charged into a very dense cover. Having had some experience of pig in India and Indo-China, I was loath to enter the cover. The only way one could negotiate it was to crawl, and the idea of meeting a boar face to face on all fours was not attractive. Old Perera, however, who had eyes at least a hundred per cent better than mine, peered through the matted grass and vine and announced that the pack had not cornered the pig but were engaged with a giant talagoya.

The talagoya is eatable but protected, so we called the pack off and drew again for pig. The going became increasingly rough. Tracks of boar were everywhere and often we found the huge spongy mass of elephant droppings. Down in a cave under an outcropping of gneiss rock we found the lair of a bear, with his hairs still sticking to the rubbing wall. We flushed small game all the time. Quails whizzed up under foot; green pigeons rattled out of the trees; twice hares scuttled away almost under my feet; and a mouse-deer made his frantic break for freedom in front of the dogs.

The sun was already down and Perera was starting to

lead us back toward the cars when we suddenly came out into an open glade of the forest and found ourselves on the edge of one of the tanks. It was a scene of great beauty. Teal were in for their night's rest and, far out on the glassy water, I saw the snout of a crocodile cruising in the purple shallows. We were about to leave this peaceful and lovely scene and beat a retreat through the bush to the trail where we had left the cars when suddenly a huge elephant ambled into the glade, not fifty yards in front of us. He or she — the Ceylon elephant seldom carries any ivory — raised its trunk and slowly swept the wind. Luckily, we were on the down side of whatever air currents were stirring, but the hounds must have made a stir, for the great ears bent forward and the elephant shifted its weight uneasily backwards and forwards. This, I remembered vividly from Indo-China days, was the point at which a charge might develop; and, signalling Jonklaas, Perera and my gun-bearer, we all faded into the jungle.

The sequel is another example of Ceylonese courtesy. Old Perera felt it was up to him to get me a pig, but just in case we did not have any luck, he had personally gone out early that morning and bagged a tender sow for me. Unknown to us, she was resting in the back of the car and, on our arrival home, was sent to the cook with my compliments.

Chapter XIII

MAHSEER AND WALAYA

THE Province of Uva in south-eastern Ceylon is noted for its salubrious climate, incomparable scenery and handsome people, but none of the many books which detail its charms mentions the sporting possibilities of its rivers. Rising in the tea-blanketed mountains of the central heartland, these streams plunge rapidly down from elevations of over 6,000 feet to the relatively flat lands of the low country and carry in their jungle-hedged lower waters many fine specimens of that greatest of all Asiatic game fish, the mahseer.

Many globe-circling fishermen rank the mahseer ahead of the salmon and go on to show that its battling reputation rests solidly on the fact that the mahseer has more tail and fin areas in relation to its body than the salmon and, therefore, is capable of greater propulsion. The mahseer is a carp and has all the characteristics of this hardy family of fishes. Its leathery mouth, without a vestige of a tooth, can bend a spoon double and crush the toughest fresh-water snails. Its main diet is composed of small fish and that is why it can be caught by spoons and other artificial bait that simulate them.

In Ceylon, the mahseer runs much smaller than its Indian cousin. H. S. Thomas, in his admirable book *The Rod in India* (1897), cites a fish, caught by P. G. Sanderson, that tipped the scales at 150 pounds, and Mr. Thomas added that he believed it was possible that mahseer up to 200 pounds exist in some of the great rivers of India.

Mr. Sanderson said of his fish that 'it had a shoulder like a bullock, was five feet long and had a three-foot two-inch girth. I could only lift it a few inches off the ground with both arms.'

The rivers of Ceylon are much smaller and a fish of forty pounds is the record for the Island. The average mahseer runs under ten pounds. Although found in most of the rivers below 1,000 feet elevation, mahseer are hard to locate because of the dynamiting by the villagers. This foolish crime not only kills the big and barely edible fish, but destroys the fingerlings as well. The result is that only in the wilder and less accessible stretches are mahseer still found. So scarce are they that only a few of the Island's fishermen seek them, the great majority being content with the trout of the mountains or the marine fish of the surrounding seas.

Among this small band of anglers dedicated to the mahseer is my friend C. E. Norris, a tea planter of Pingarawa Estate, near Namunukula, and it was by his kind invitation that my wife and I were initiated into mahseer fishing in Ceylon. A keen naturalist, artist, and pillar of the Game and Fauna Protection Society, Norris is an all-round sportsman who devotes virtually all his spare time to working for the preservation of the Island's diminishing wild life. His wife, Patsy, is just as devoted to the jungles and streams and has taken some fine still and moving pictures of big and small game.

From the lawn before the Pingarawa bungalow, the land drops away sharply and exposes one of the loveliest vistas in all Ceylon. In the foreground lies the great plain of the low-country jungle which stretches away to the blue line of the Kataragama Hills. These are the hills which shelter the temple of the Kataragama Devio, most powerful of the Island's many gods. To the left of the hills, one can see the great grey outline of elephant rock that rises from the jungle fastnesses of the Yala Reserve. Just beyond

these landmarks, there is the faint sapphire glint of the Indian Ocean.

A short way down the valley, on a neighbouring estate, lives W. W. A. Phillips, the well-known ornithologist, with whom we spent a delightful two hours learning about the district. Phillips knows a lot about the fish of Ceylon, but his speciality is, of course, birds.

The Kumbukkan Oya, the river which we intended to fish, lies some thirty miles down-country from Namunukula, so we rose early and just after dawn were rolling along the twisting mountain roads of Uva to the village of Monoragala, near which we intended to leave the cars and start overland to the river. It was a fine morning with just enough overcast to keep the sun from burning but not enough to threaten rain. At the village we were joined by Harry Percy, a neighbouring planter, and his wife, and later took on Ralahamy, an old Sinhalese villager who knew the river and was to act as gillie. Gaily turned out in red shirt and breech-clout, with his long hair tied up in a neat bun behind, and a broad grin on his quizzical face, he looked the picture of a faithful jungle retainer.

Leaving the cars on the road, we followed Ralahamy through a series of lush paddy-fields to the edge of the jungle and then struck off by a path to the gorge where the Kumbukkan Oya winds its devious way between great outcroppings of ancient rock. We had been warned by Norris that the paddy-field would be full of leeches and, just as we arrived at the river, I happened to glance down at my legs and found a small army of the vicious little brown fellows making their way over my shoes to the happy sucking-ground of my bare legs. If knocked off before he gets his head in, the leech is handled easily, but if he once gets attached and is then pulled off he is apt to leave a nasty sore.

We emerged on the river at Crocodile Pool, an

olive-green body of water about a hundred yards long by twenty-five wide. It was christened Crocodile Pool by the planter-fishermen as a crocodile was seen there. Many years ago, a man fell in and never reappeared. Whether he was sucked down into one of the subterranean caves with which the river abounds or was, in fact, devoured by a mugger, no one knows; but Norris has seen a big one basking on the bank and prefers not to swim in this particular pool. Giant kumbuk trees, from which the river derives its name, line the bank and support a host of jungle creepers, some of which may eventually smother the trees themselves.

In the soft sand at the water's edge I noticed the delicate slot-marks of a sambhur deer and, later, saw the flash of red as a junglecock rocketed off into the bushes. Blue mormon butterflies, their gorgeous black and blue wings beating gently, soared past us and one, caught in mid-air by the fighter-pilot attack of a huge horse-fly, fell slowly to the ground while the fly sucked out its life blood. Many jungle birds were about and Norris, one of whose talents is devoted to painting birds, showed me racket-tailed drongos, yellow-browed bulbuls and little shamas, whose sweet notes sound somewhat like those of a nightingale.

The business of the day was fishing, however, and, while the wives rested and took pictures of the jungle, the three of us put together our gear. I was using a light plastic Wonder rod that has done me yeoman service on rivers and lakes all over the world, a Phleuger Supreme reel and a braided silk five-pound test line. I had brought along a variety of spoons and plugs, including some old rusty silver spoons that I had used to catch mahseer in India twenty years earlier.

Norris kindly gave me the Crocodile Pool to myself and went off upstream with Percy. Mahseer are among the world's most timid fish and will refuse the most tempting baits if they have been scared. Accordingly, I stalked the

pool from behind the cover of the rocks and cast my spoon over this protecting rampart. The lure hit the water at exactly the spot I wished it to — an eddy just where the river debouched from a narrow channel between towering rocks. Reeling in slowly, I braced myself for the lunge of a mahseer, for nine times out of ten, if there are fish in a pool, they will rise to the first cast. The spoon came back to me without interruption, however, and even though I tried every one of my assortment of tempters, the mahseer of that pool, if there were any, remained unmoved.

After a while I stopped fishing and, climbing up on the rocks, studied the shallows of the pool. It was only then that I suddenly realized a strange thing: there were no fry in the pool. A careful examination proved to me conclusively that the pool was, in fact, completely devoid of all types of aquatic life. There were not even frogs. The evidence was all too apparent: the pool had been dynamited not long before we came to fish it.

Above the pool, the river ran through a series of gorges and, above these, flattened out again into another series of long narrow pools. While fishing one of these, I heard a shout from Percy and, glancing ahead, noticed that he was racing back along the edge of a big pool while his rod was bent nearly double. There was no doubt about it; he was on to a good fish. The mahseer's first rush is his most powerful defence and it is during this initial effort that he often frees himself. In this case, however, Percy was able to check the rush and it looked as though he might win the battle, when the wily fish suddenly reversed himself and, before Percy could reel in, darted into an underwater cave with yards of free line to play with. Unwittingly, Percy then struck hard to free the line and, with a whining snap, it parted.

Speculation on lost fish is perhaps the only good part of losing them. We easily arrived at the fact that if Percy's nylon had a breaking strain of fifteen pounds, the piscatorial

giant that caused it to part must have been well up in the pounds himself.

Percy's luck (or lack of it) stimulated Norris and me to even greater efforts, but in vain. Pool after promising pool saw our lures without a strike. Fishing should not be a preclusive sport, however, and the disdain of the mahseer did not prevent me from thoroughly enjoying the beauty of the river and its wild jungle setting. As we progressed farther upstream, the gorge grew deeper and the rocky hills on either side steeper and more forbidding. Ralahamy said that many leopards live in the caves along this oya and that, even though the creepers which the villagers use for binding their huts and fences flourish on the hill-sides, few men care to seek for them there.

We found no tracks of bear, far more feared by the villagers than the leopard, but on a sandy spit of land in the river we did discover a mop-like mass of elephant dung, and not old dung either. Ralahamy said that this particular elephant lives along the river and had been known to chase persons that surprised him at his bath.

At another deep jungle pool we swam, then lunched and stretched out in the mellow afternoon sunlight and talked of mahseer.

The name comes from the Persian *mahi*, meaning a fish, and *sher*, meaning a lion. And like a lion, the mahseer prefers a rocky den ; the rockier the river, the more it is apt to hold this king of Asian game fish.

Hooking and tiring a mahseer is only half the battle ; he still has to be landed and there are four approved ways of achieving this desirable end. In India, my gillie used to try to net the fish and lost many by frightening them into a last desperate struggle that, on several occasions, cost me a fine fish. Gaffing is another method, popular on the Indian rivers, but the mahseer's marble-hard scales make this also a risky business. I decided finally that wearing the fish out and then gently shelving him on a sloping

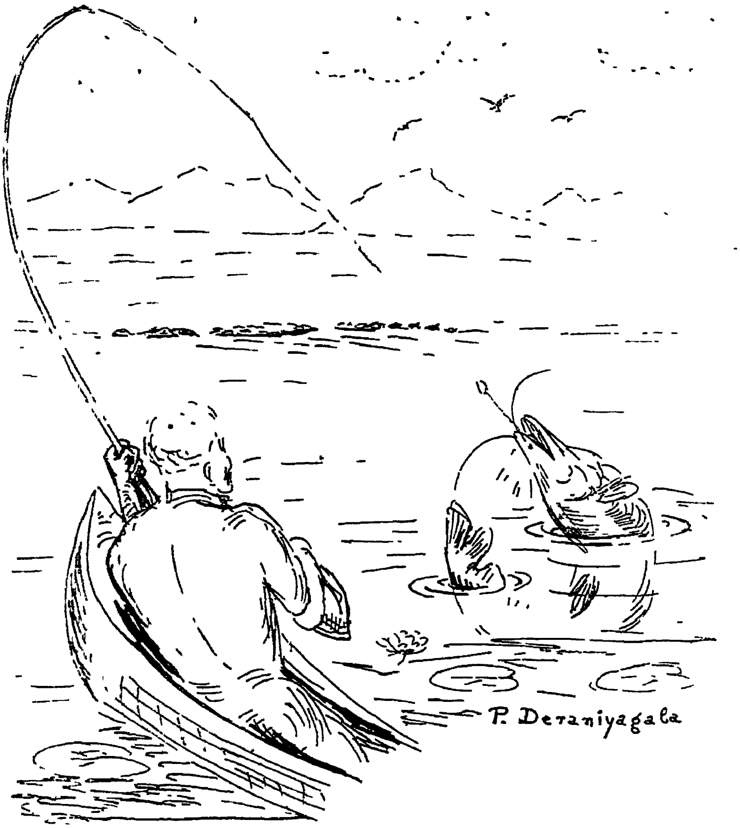
beach was the surest tactic. But just as soon as he was well out of the water, I quickly gave him the *coup de grâce* in the form of a stiff blow on the head.

There are two types of mahseer found in the East — the lela, the common type, which looks like the Carnatic carp, and the mastula, a beautifully coloured fish. Mahseer bite all the year round but many fishermen claim that they are hungrier during the north-east monsoon which blows from January to April. It is idle to try and catch them on days when the water is discoloured, although some claim that they can be caught in dirty water by the use of chicken guts and other unappetizing baits.

Perfect conditions for mahseer entail gin-clear water when the angler must stalk his fish with all the craft he would use on a Highland stag. It is this combination of hunting and fishing, plus the really formidable fighting powers of the mahseer, that give it its great appeal. Like its sea-going cousin, the bonefish, the mahseer is not good eating and at times is said to be actually poisonous.

We fished again on the way back but without reward. The Devio of the mahseer was simply not for us, but not even an empty creel can spoil a fine day on a jungle river and we arrived home for bath and whisky with the pervading feeling of satisfied peace that such a day inevitably produces.

Although not in the same class with the mahseer, good sport is furnished by the *walaya*, a fish that resembles a cross between a catfish and a shark, and the *loola*, a large-headed fish with excellent eating flesh. Both of these fish can be found in most of the rivers and many of the larger tanks; it pays to keep a light casting rod in the luggage compartment of the car against the time when it may come in handy. There is nothing like half an hour's fishing to relax a man, especially after a strenuous cornerstone-laying.



The walaya is a hard fighter

I remember particularly a late afternoon excursion on the tank at Polonnaruwa when the walaya hit my plug with the heavy pull of a big fish and my light bait-casting rod bent nearly double before Velu, the Sinhalese boatman who was paddling the canvas and rubber canoe, was able to ease us toward the fish. Walaya, whose popular name is 'fresh-water shark', is a hard fighter and I knew he would give me a worth-while battle before I was able to drag him aboard. I had neither net nor gaff and the canoe was so tippy that we were able to keep it afloat only by balancing precariously in the exact centre of gravity. Ten minutes

later the fish tired, and with the help of Velu, who grabbed its tail, I was able to lift it into the canoe. About three feet long and weighing fifteen pounds, the walaya was a most satisfactory victory ; its shark-like jaws never stopped snapping at us until I had driven a knife into its brain.

There were many more walayas rising, but before I cast again I rested and enjoyed the superb setting. I was fishing in the vast tank of Parakrama Bahu, The Great, one of the mightiest builders of medieval Ceylon. The tank, which is in reality a lake of some sixteen square miles, was constructed by him in A.D. 1160. The bund, or retaining wall, which holds back the waters, is eight miles long and was so well built that only minor repairs are necessary to keep it in shape.

This tank is one of the loveliest in Ceylon and the Government rest-house on its shore was chosen as an overnight stopping-place for the Queen and Duke when they toured that part of the Island. Once proud capital of the Sinhalese Kings, Polonnaruwa is still, even in its ruin, a place of grandeur and haunting beauty. One hundred and thirty-four miles from Colombo, in North Central Province, it is well worth the hot five-hour drive.

From the lake I could see the tips of the Aucicul dagobas and the crumbling walls of forgotten palaces. Near where I caught the walaya is a small island where the ruins of a summer pavilion testified to the taste of the kings. That section of the lake has always been a favourite of birds and some years ago the Government created a sanctuary there. Snowy egrets, slim-legged herons and darting cotton teal abound in the riparian swamps, while from the island of the pavilion came the sweet song of the shama, the Island's master singer. Being March, it was the mating season for many of the tank birds and the medley of songs was a joy to hear.

Before casting for another walaya, I decided to try for

some gerami, the best eating fish in the tanks of Ceylon. Essentially a vegetarian, this deep-bellied fish can be caught only on wild fig, baked potato and similar exotic baits. The gerami is not native to Ceylon but was introduced there in 1940. I caught six excellent fish running to about half a pound each, on pieces of banana.

The tank was so full that the surrounding jungle was indented by numerous bays and lagoons and I asked Velu to paddle up one of these flooded areas on the chance that the really big walaya might have gone there in their search for young water birds. The walaya, like its ocean-going cousin, is none too fussy about what it eats and will gulp a brace of young whistling teal as soon as it would a shoal of baby fish.

Gliding up a narrow channel between the white bones of dead satinwood trees, we emerged into a watery glen of spectacular beauty. Sunlight filtering down through the leaves and clinging creepers of the jungle threw a dappled light on the water, whose mirror-like surface reflected the greens of the vegetation and bright sapphire blue of the skies. At the far end of the glen, an axis doe and her fawn eyed us gravely and then slowly melted into the bush. Wanderoo monkeys chattered high in the branches and far off I heard the bark of a sambhur.

Under the overhanging branches of a tamarind tree there was a sudden swirl of water and, quickly shooting my plug to within a few feet of the ripples, I drew it slowly back over the area of the disturbance. No fish rose, but the blunt snout of a crocodile broke water and moved slowly away.

That elephants also used the glen was evident from the broken branches of bo trees which the great beasts had pulled down in order to get at the tender leaves. Like the crocodiles, however, the elephants are a dying species in Ceylon. It is estimated that there are not more than a thousand wild elephants left on the Island and the yearly

death and capture rate far exceeds the birth rate. Even though they are protected by law, elephants are still shot when they encroach upon the village *chenas* to destroy the crops, and permits are still issued for the capture of a limited number of young. If a method of breeding from the several thousand captive elephants could be found, these losses would not be so dangerous, but domesticated elephants simply don't breed. The few babies born in captivity are invariably the result of wild mating.

The glen failed to yield a fish and, paddling out to the open water again, I trolled along the shores until another sharp lunge at my spoon nearly ripped the rod out of my hand. This was a real tiger of a walaya, and even though I fought him for a quarter of an hour he showed little sign of tiring. The sun had long since set and the purple shadows were beginning to darken on the water. The rest-house, moreover, was a good four miles away and the evening breeze, which was blowing strongly across the lake, was against us. Spurred by these factors, I put undue pressure on the walaya and with a sudden dart he snapped the line and made off. Just retribution for the impatient.

On another trip to Polonnaruwa — this time by air with John and Mae Esterline of my Embassy and Maisie Scofield of Florida — I retained the services of Appuwa, a twenty-eight-year-old Sinhalese youth who resided at the village of Anga Medilla, near the Ambanganga River. He was recommended by the rest-house keeper at Polonnaruwa as a good jungle guide who could lead us to pools in the river where we could cast for mahseer. Subsequent discussions with Appuwa, however, revealed that he did not know what kind of fish a mahseer was, but he said he would show us big river walaya and loola.

Driving along the bund past the three great tanks of Polonnaruwa, known collectively as the 'Seas of Parakrama Bahu', we arrived at the end of the motorable road

and entered the jungle on foot. As a precaution, I carried a light rifle; bears were reported numerous and the previous week a man had been badly mauled on the bank of the river.

About half an hour's walk up the left bank we came upon a place where the river was partially dammed by a series of low cement walls built over rock. Behind this a pool of about a hundred yards had formed and it was in this pool that Appuwa said the big fellows could be found. Hardly had we set up our tackle when there was a great splash at the upper end of the pool and Appuwa, who spoke no English, nodded his long locks vigorously.

I was using a six-foot glass casting rod, a Phleuger Supreme reel and ten-pound test line, on the end of which I had hung a silver spoon with a wiggly red tail. Casting as near the splash as I could, I started to draw the spoon in rapidly and had barely begun this operation when a fish struck hard. I struck back to set the hook and felt a lunge, like a colt on the end of a training rope, as the big fish started out to deep water.

Light casting reels have no drags and the line burned my fingers as it sang out. Ten minutes later I worked the fish into the shallows and beached it. Over three feet long and weighing about fifteen pounds, the walaya was a fine specimen of its type.

John Esterline, who was fishing farther down the pool, then let out a whoop and eventually captured an even bigger walaya, which must have weighed in at over twenty pounds. He also caught a nice four-pound loola. Neither of the women succeeded in actually catching a fish although Maisie Scofield, who is a member of the Ladies' Fly Fishing Club of America and one of the best with a dry fly, hooked two good fish and lost them.

With the help of Ernest, my chauffeur, I found out that Appuwa was a member of the dhobi caste and that his village was situated out in the wilds because, in the old

days, low-caste villages were not allowed any nearer to the holy city of Polonnaruwa. I was also informed that the local deity was the Minneriya Devio and that the reason our bag came to over forty pounds was due to the camphor and prayers of Appuwa.

Chapter XIV

TEA

A MILE high in the mountains of Ceylon lies St. Ives, an estate whose broad acres of tea clothe the rugged slopes with a perpetual carpet of green. St. Ives, however, is far more than a mere producing area ; it is a small world with a population of more than 1,600 persons, a school, a temple to the elephant god Ganesh, a bazaar, a cemetery, a dispensary and a way of life which is still unique in a changing world. Through the kindness of Philip St. Clair and his charming wife, I was able to arrange for my family to spend a month on the estate, and during week-ends had an opportunity to study the complexes of the community.

In the bright early mornings the horses were saddled and my daughter Phillippa and I rode out from the flower-bordered bungalow to the company road. There we turned toward the heights above us and started climbing. Tea roads are among the neatest in the world, carefully ditched on either side and immaculately clean — they are a pleasure to walk on, drive on or ride on. We passed between serried rows of tea bushes interspersed with trees whose gripping roots hold the soil on the hillsides and larger shade trees which assist the cultivation of the tea. Occasionally we passed groups of Tamil women engaged in plucking the crop. They invariably smiled, while the men raised their hands to their heads in salute and the children beamed at us. Certainly this feudal duchy of tea appeared a happy one.

The horses — Phillippa's black Arab stallion Saad Nafea and Rene's Irish cob Buddy — were full of grain and needed the edge taken off them. Accordingly, instead of

taking the estate road home, we struck off on a side trail which led across the valley and then climbed high into the mountains where we could see above the tea the high sky meadows, or *patnas*. These are the same upland pastures where, in the old days, Sir Samuel Baker and others of his kind used to hunt their hounds, and where, on the wild windy nights, the Tamils still say they hear the cry of hounds hot on a sambhur's trail.

On the summit ridge we dismounted and let the horses graze while we sat on a warm ledge and gazed down on a memorable vista. As far as we could see lay the green-clad slopes of tea, punctuated here and there by the oblong of a tea factory or the long white lines of the labourers. Far below us we saw tiny white bullocks dragging a toy cart, and nearer, where the river widened, the flashing white of shirts or saris as the women flogged the stones with their washing. In the hollows between the patnas lay small black ponds with an occasional herd of semi-wild buffaloes soaking in their ebony depths.

Before us, in fact, lay a segment of the golden heart of Ceylon — the area which produces more than one-half of the wealth of the Island and whose product is a virtual necessity from Scotland to Australia. Tea means even more to the Commonwealth than coffee means to us Americans; and Ceylon, as the number-one producer of best quality tea, is the primary source of the Englishman's vital 'dish'.

Tea, for the efficient estates, is a highly profitable business. St. Ives, one of the best units of the Ceylon Tea Company which owns about 5,000 acres, has always paid handsome dividends. The land, which was originally planted in coffee, was opened up in 1854 and was converted to tea in 1887. St. Ives now consists of 800 bearing acres, on which flourish thousands of tea plants at nearly 3,500 bushes to the acre.

Tea is actually a baby tree and, if left alone, will grow

The average tea bush yields a harvest of tender leaves every eight to ten days

to a fair-sized tree. For estate purposes, however, it is pruned down to a bushy growth of about three feet in height and four feet in diameter. Planted in rows with three feet between them, the average trees yield a harvest of tender leaves to the pluckers every eight to ten days. An average yield at St. Ives is around one thousand pounds of manufactured tea per acre per year.

One morning St. Clair took me to his factory and showed me the various steps in the processing of tea for the market. A great barn-like structure with a pervading smell of green apples (strangely reminiscent to me of the sour mash in a Virginia bootlegger's still), the tea factory houses the delicate and complicated business of tea-making.

The green leaf is weighed in and then taken to the lofts and spread out on the *tats*, or shelves of jute hessian. This process is called 'withering' and is aided during rainy weather by hot air passed over the tats by means of a system of fans. The period taken for correct withering varies according to the weather conditions, but 14 to 16 hours is a rough average. The withered leaf, after the moisture has been extracted, is collected, weighed and passed to the room below.

The second process is called 'rolling'. The withered leaf is fed into cylindrical drums which revolve over a circular wooden table fitted with battens shaped like scimitars. Pressure is applied to the leaf by a pressure cap. The object of this operation is to roll and twist the leaf, and by doing so the tender and tippy ends become separated from the main body. Rolling is generally carried out for four or five periods of half an hour each. The leaf is sifted, the tippy ends extracted and spread on cement fermenting-tables where they are left until they have acquired the necessary coppery colour and aroma. This fermentation may take from 1¾ to 3½ hours, depending upon such factors as the type of liquor one is hoping to produce. 'Liquor' is the term used to denote the colour and strength of the tea produced. The teas extracted by the above process, between each roll, are referred to as *dhools* and to a great extent constitute the best of the grades made.

The fermented teas are then fired by hot-air driers. The tea is fed in, on an endless belt, and gradually descends to the bottom of the machine when, after about twenty minutes, it emerges as black tea. After firing, the teas are sifted, not only to extract impurities but also to take out the leaf which is too small or of unsuitable shape for the main grade which is called Broken Orange Pekoe.

The labour that plucks the tea is all Tamil — originally indentured workers from South India but now almost entirely home-grown at St. Ives. Some of the older estate

workers came from across the Palk Straits but 90 per cent of the present force was born on the estate. The current census shows 408 working males, 452 working females and 37 working children. There are also 60 non-working adults, 347 non-working children, *i.e.* those between 3 and 14, and 308 infants under 3 years old. The grand totals reveal that 897 persons work the tea and 715 are supported by them and by estate pensions.

Relations between St. Clair and his labour are good. The estate provides free medical and maternity service. Even education is largely an estate matter, as the Ceylon Government pays only 40 per cent of the bill. Irene and I inspected the neat school-house and met the three school-marms. The estate gives all non-working children one meal a day and pensions aged workers. This pension is small, amounting to only 5 to 6 rupees per month (roughly $1.25 to $1.50 U.S.), but the old people usually live with their relatives. In cases where there are no relatives, the estate supports the aged worker. If a man and wife want to go back to India they can draw a maximum of 2,000 rupees on retirement.

The Tamils are a peaceful but argumentative people and most non-criminal problems are left to the *kangany*, or headman, who sits as a kind of unofficial magistrate. Appeals can, of course, be made to the management or to the unions.

If it were not for weddings and funerals, the Tamil might balance his budget. These inevitable events cost a minimum of several hundred rupees and to meet them the Tamil borrows from the Afghan money-lender. These baggy-trousered gentlemen fatten on interest rates running to twenty per cent per month and soon have the poor Tamil at a point where the interest far exceeds the initial loan. There are laws against such usury, but the Tamil can't afford to go to court, and anyway the important point is not the money but the wedding or the funeral. Head held

high, he slaves the rest of his life to meet the debts incurred.

The lords of this green and scented world of tea are also bound to the wheel. The estate bungalows are roomy, surrounded by really lovely gardens, and servants are plentiful and relatively cheap. Social life is mainly limited to the local club — consisting of tennis courts and a bar. There, at week-ends, the planters gather for bridge, gossip, drink, billiards and tennis. Somerset Maugham might not find the makings of a great novel immediately, but the pressures of life in the small tea communities of Ceylon are apparent.

There is no model for the novel *Elephant Walk* which essayed to portray the grand old days of planting in Ceylon, but there were certainly days when the life of an estate manager was far more luxurious than it is today. Henry Field, who ran St. Ives from 1891 to 1909, maintained four hunters and a pack of hounds, yet his salary was only 4,000 rupees a year. In an old faded ledger of the period, he complains to the managers in London of the paucity of this stipend and cites the fact that his remuneration was 1,000 rupees less than his predecessor received ten years before.

Mounted hunting stopped in the highlands with the passing of the horse, and the only two horses in the whole district, while we were there, were those of the children which I shipped up from Colombo. There is, however, no lack of sport for the field- or stream-minded planter. Many of the cold clear streams of the mountains are stocked with rainbow trout and, by joining the Ceylon Fishing Club, the angler can have some excellent sport. My best day resulted in twenty fish, averaging about twelve inches. The Bula Ella, the Ambawala, the Nanuoya and the Kandapola, to name a few of the best-known rivers, run through stretches of wild and lovely country. On a sandy bar of the Bula Ella, in the jungle stretch, I saw the pug-marks of a leopard and along the upper reaches of the Ambawala the banks are torn by the rootings of wild boars.

There are still sambhurs to be shot in the heavily jungled areas and occasionally hill leopards, but the keen shikari usually goes to the low country for his game. I know one planter, however, who shoots junglecocks above 4,000 feet and says it is prime sport. Golfers are lucky because the Nuwara Eliya 18-hole course is considered one of the best in the East. The Hill Club is also a feature of Nuwara Eliya. The food is good, the rooms airy and clean, but the atmosphere is nostalgic. Even the fat trout, whose fading skins are displayed on the walls with the glassy-eyed bears and leopards, seem to murmur of better days.

Ripples from the vast upheavals that are today affecting the social and economic life of the East have, however, begun to lap at the remote world of tea. The children of the Tamil labourers are learning in books of a broad world beyond the back-breaking future of tea-plucking. The planters, whose erstwhile worries were limited to the auction prices at London's Mincing Lane, now have to face a whole new set of imponderables. Only the serene green hills of tea seem unperturbed.

Chapter XV

THE CADJUN CURTAIN

IN the primitive school-house of a village far off in the jungles of the Wanni in the Northern Province, a young woman teacher fainted. That she fainted was hardly news, for teachers, like other hard-working public servants all over the world, are prone to occupational exhaustion. This teacher's collapse, however, was due to a curious and rather terrible fact: she fainted because she was never allowed to sit down in her own classroom.

In the court-house of a country town in the south of the Island, a murder trial was in progress. A man had been stabbed through the heart with a rusty knife. The knife was found with blood still on it in the hut of another man who had been heard arguing with the deceased, half an hour before the crime was committed. This man was later indicted and proved quite unable to furnish an alibi. His defence, while not admitted in evidence by the judge, was a valid argument with the jury. 'I could not have killed this man,' said the accused, 'because I would not dare to touch him.'

Behind these two strange cases lies the Sinhalese caste system, a shadowy structure based on heredity that strongly influences the social behaviour of the Lion People. Among the rich of the cities caste lines are often blurred by class distinctions, derived from wealth or position, but in the country — and 90 per cent of the eight million people of Ceylon are peasant cultivators — caste is still a force to conjure with. Of these eight million, however, only about five million are Sinhalese, and it is the Sinhalese caste system with which these notes are concerned. The two

million or more Tamils who also inhabit Ceylon have their own caste structure which is entirely separate from that of the Sinhalese.

I must hasten to add, at this point, that the Government of Ceylon does not even admit the existence of caste. Caste differences have no validity under the law or the constitution, and mention of caste is banned from official documents. The ultimate effect of this official attitude is a conspiracy of silence that tends to imply that caste is no longer a factor in the land. That such is not the case any careful observer of the Ceylon social *mores* will soon realize, but his research will require patience. I must also stress the point that it is my belief that no foreigner ever really grasps the nuances of the Sinhalese caste system and that all any observer can do is to give a rough and probably rather inaccurate picture of this subtle set of social distinctions.

It was quite a while before I was able to learn that the schoolmarm was of the debased Gahala-barava caste, a caste of funeral drummers and executioners, and therefore quite unfit to sit in the presence of her high-caste Goyigama charges. The caste difference between the murdered man and the accused was even vaster, for the former was a Mudali Goyigama, second highest of the Goyigama sub-castes, and the latter was a Rodi, the lowest of the low in the caste hierarchy.

Few foreigners have studied caste in Ceylon and even fewer have set their observations down on paper. The chief reason for this is undoubtedly the fact that the Ceylonese are extremely diffident and will seldom admit its existence, much less discuss it freely. The literature on the subject is therefore scanty; the only important study is by Professor Bryce Ryan of Cornell whose *Caste in Modern Ceylon* was written after four years' research. Significantly, nothing of note has been written on caste by a Ceylonese within the past fifty years.

The first European to inquire into caste in Ceylon was Robert Knox, the observant British prisoner of the King of Kandy for twenty years. Knox wrote, 'Among this people are divers and sundry castes or degrees of quality, which is not according to their riches or places of honour the King promotes them to, but according to their descent or blood'.

While caste has many ramifications, its relation to sex and marriage is the most important. Knox wrote, 'If any female should be so deluded as to commit folly with one beneath her, her friends would certainly kill her as there would be no other way to wipe off the dishonour she has done her family, save by her blood. Yet for a man it is not accounted any shame for a man of the highest degree to lay with a woman far inferior to him, nay of the very lowest degree: providing he neither eats nor drinks with her nor takes her as his wife'.

Since Knox's day there has been some relaxation of viewpoint in regard to such intimacy between the castes, but even today high-caste persons who broke caste rules on these ironbound issues could expect nothing short of complete social ostracism. There is the case of the high-caste up-country gentleman who chose to sacrifice all for love and married a low-caste girl. He was immediately cut off from family, friends and employment and is said to have ended up pulling a rickshaw in the slums of Colombo.

It is in family and marriage relationships that caste has its strongest hold. Ryan said that caste could not survive without the institution of the family with its concepts of honour, good name and loyalty. Requirements of a regular marriage are consent of the respective heads of both families, sanction of the relatives and, most vital, the fact that both parties are of the same caste and preferably of equal rank within that caste. Sometimes it is possible, by means of a dowry, for a girl of lower rank to marry a

higher-ranking man within the same caste, but marriage outside the caste would be unthinkable.

At the top of the Sinhalese caste structure are the Goyigamas, literally the cultivators of the soil. By far the largest caste in the Island, the nine sub-castes of the Goyigamas number fully half of all the Sinhalese peoples. The base of the caste pyramid, in fact, rests on a few thousand debased, low-caste persons, while the top consists of around three millions. This is in sharp contrast to India where the small Brahmin hierarchy lords it over a vast series of lower castes.

On the pinnacle of the Goyigama caste sit the Radala, the Kandyan chieftains. These aristocratic gentlemen and the next lower caste beneath them, the Mudali, are spoken of as the 'good Goyigamas'. Marriage between a Radala and a Mudali is possible but unlikely, and marriage between a Radala and one of the lower sub-castes of the Goyigama hierarchy would rock Kandyan society.

Kandy, the old capital of the Sinhalese kings, is situated in the hills some seventy miles inland from Colombo and is a stronghold of caste consciousness. The estates of the Radala are still worked on a feudal basis with well-defined prerogatives. Food in a Radala manor-house is prepared only by lower-ranking Goyigamas. Visitors of lower rank sit upon stools rather than chairs. The presence in all Goyigama homes of the *kolombuva*, or stool, is a visible sign of the Goyigama household. If a Radala visited a low-caste home, he would be given a chair with a white cloth over it and no one in the household would sit while the Radala was standing. If a Radala deigned to accept food in a low-caste home, he would be served at a separate table and his hosts would not eat until he had finished.

If a member of a really low caste calls on a Radala he will not enter the Radala's yard but asks permission from the gate. If the Radala orders him to be given a drink, it will be in a coconut shell which will subsequently be

burned. No one below the Goyigama caste would be offered betel.

Despite the feudal system imposed by caste, relations between the Radala and those beneath them are not usually strained. On our visits to Radala households in the Kandyan district, we never saw any indication of servility or unpleasantness due to caste. The relationship between the master and his peasants was one of benevolent interest.

In the old days, it was possible to tell a high- from a low-caste person by dress, but this distinction, especially in the urban areas, is rapidly becoming obsolete. Traditionally, low castes of both sexes were forbidden to wear anything above the waist, but today this is observed only in rural areas and usually by the men only. Low-caste women do not wear saris but loop their scarves around so as to effectually cover their breasts.

It is, however, still possible to tell the relationship between two persons if one sees them greet one another. Salutation in Ceylon is by means of pressing the hands together and bowing. The position of the hands and head clearly indicates, to the initiated, whether or not a person is worshipping a superior, saluting an equal or noticing an inferior.

The Sinhalese language is linked tightly to caste concepts. Knox said, 'Their language is copious, elegant, courtly. They have no less than twelve ways to address women according to their title. They have eight words for thou or you.' Most of these forms are in use today and one of the hazards in learning Sinhalese would be to differentiate between these terms of address. If, for instance, one used the personal pronoun 'you' in speaking to a man of equal rank, it would be a blood insult. Correctly, this term is used by a Goyigama in reference to one of a lower caste, never when addressing a relative, as it is also the term used when speaking of lower animals.

One of the first questions asked by the student of

Ceylon's culture pattern is, how can there be a caste system when Ceylon is a Buddhist country? Buddhism *per se* denies caste. Before the Master, all men are equal and have the same opportunity to achieve virtue. Faced with this paradox, the Sinhalese hastens to explain matters by saying that 'caste is not for the Buddha; it is for the Kings'. No Sinhalese would defend caste on religious grounds. By the same token, caste does play some part in the Buddhist priesthood. The Siyam Nikaya, the largest and most powerful of the religious orders, is said to be open only to the cultivator or Goyigama class. Other Buddhist orders are open only to members of other castes, the Amarapura Nikaya being composed mainly of members of the cinnamon-peeler caste.

The close relation between caste and religion is exemplified by the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy. The lay head of the temple is a Radala and below him are ranged a whole series of lower-caste functionaries. There are the watchers and sweepers, members of the Vahumpura or jaggery-making caste, and the temple drummers, from the Barava or tom-tom-beating caste. The annual *perahera* is only possible because the attendants, whip crackers, dancers, etc., are governed by caste obligation to perform their various duties.

The obligation to carry on these traditional duties does not, however, stem purely from caste. Virtually all of the temple attendants hold their lands under a complicated feudal system in which they repay the temple with certain fixed duties. Failure to perform these duties would result in losing their source of sustenance.

While the Kandyan highlands are certainly the caste citadels of modern Ceylon, caste also plays an important part in the social structure of the low country. These populous areas, stretching along the sea coast, have a less feudal base than the mountain enclaves and have been far more influenced by foreigners than the more isolated

Kandyans. The Karavas, or fishermen, are the most important of the low country castes after the Goyigamas, and today they hold far more economic power in the country than the upper castes. They owe some of this position to the fact that the Portuguese and Dutch used them as producers of commodities. Under the British, this special status was further enhanced as the rulers wished to raise the Karavas in order to counterbalance the Goyigamas.

Many of the Karavas are Catholics, but Christianity appears to have no more effect on caste than Buddhism. Religion and caste are simply viewed as two separate entities. This is a radically different conception from that of India where caste is simply the stepchild of religion and caste differences are based on religious differences.

Next in importance of the low-country castes are the Salagamas or cinnamon peelers. Concentrated along the coast, south of Colombo, the Salagamas benefited greatly when demand for the spice gave them a special significance. Neither the Salagamas nor the Karavas hide their caste; they are proud of it. Below the Salagamas come the Duravas, or toddy tappers, members of which are generally considered the lowest of the higher group of low-country castes.

Below the Duravas are ranged nineteen minor castes of gradually descending social significance.[1] At the bottom is the Rodi, the most publicized caste in Ceylon. Despite all one hears about them, there are probably not more than three or four thousand Rodiyas in the Island and their lot, while undoubtedly bitter, is improving.

'Forthwith the King established a Decree that all, both great and small, that were of that Rank or Tribe should be expelled from dwelling among the inhabitants of the land and should beg from generation to generation, from door to door; and to be looked upon and esteemed by all

[1] For a list of castes in order of rank see Appendix.

people to be so base and odious as not possibly to be more.'

Thus did Robert Knox describe the order by which a ruler of the Sinhalese peoples condemned the tribe of Rodiyas to be perpetual outcastes. Knox wrote in 1681 but the condition of the Rodiyas is still sad today. Take the hamlet of Talavitiya.

Near where the road from Colombo to Ratnapura leaves Western Province and enters Sabaragamuwa a foot-path leads off into the hills. The path runs beside a bubbling stream and beneath the towering shade of coconut palms and rubber trees. Occasionally there are stiles to prevent the cattle from reaching the lush paddy in the valley below. Then the path ends in a little clearing in the centre of which stands a decaying two-room mud hut. It is the home of Janaratna Villiya, the headman, or *hulavaliya*, of Talavitiya.

An intelligent-looking sad-faced man of about forty, the hulavaliya brought chairs for Raghavan and me, and squatting beside us, answered questions frankly. He knew Raghavan and also knew that as the Government anthropologist he was sincerely interested in improving the lot of the Rodiyas. But his pleasure at seeing us was tinged with reserve. He pointed out ruefully that even though Raghavan had visited the village on several previous occasions and clearly understood the plight of the Rodiyas, the Government has yet to give his people land. He added that there are ninety people in the village and they live on less than five acres.

This desire for the land is so deep-seated in the Rodiyas that the braver of them will sometimes attempt to leave their segregated villages and buy land outside. The hulavaliya himself did this. After years of saving he and his wife, who is clever with her needle, accumulated enough money to buy a half-acre in an adjoining village and build a small house. The day they completed it the villagers set it afire. Now he knows that the only chance his people

have of owning land is for the Government to grant them enough so that the whole village can move on to it as a unit, and sustain themselves on it.

Lacking the means of growing their own food and unable through prejudice to find any but the most degraded of sweeping jobs, the Rodiyas live today, as they have through the centuries, by begging. They have, in fact, developed begging to a fine art. Every Rodiya village has a certain beat where it is understood other Rodiyas will not poach. The social system which forces the Rodiya to beg for a living also supports him, for any Sinhalese householder who refuses charity to a Rodiya is disgraced. The Rodiyas are well aware of this and remain chanting outside the walls of the *walawas*, or great houses, of Sinhalese aristocrats who they feel are not sufficiently generous.

What was the crime committed by the ancestors of the Rodiyas for which the King condemned them?

Late in the twelfth century of our era Parakrama Bahu ruled the kingdom of Lanka from his capital at Polonnaruwa. He was a good and wise king, giving generously to the monasteries and erecting vast tanks so that his people could cultivate the land. He had a daughter named Navaratna Valli, who was beautiful but depraved. According to the legend, and the Rodiyas themselves say it is true, the King's Veddah hunter was unable one day to find game for the King's table, and fearing to return without meat, killed a child, and had it cooked for the royal dinner. The princess discovered the nature of the meat and, developing a craving for more of it, ordered the Veddah to furnish the palace with human steaks from then on.

The resulting disappearance of children terrified the countryside, and a barber, who had come to the palace to complain of the loss of his only son, was served rice and venison curry in which he recognized the deformed finger of his boy. Apprised of this terrible fact, the King drove his daughter and the Veddah hunter into the wilds and

placed on them and their progeny the curse that still haunts their descendants.

There are two castes, however, from whom the Rodiyas will not beg — the barbers or Panikki and the mat-weavers or Kinnarayas. As Knox said, 'The barber's information having been the occasion for all this misery upon this people, they in revenge abhor to eat what is dressed in the barber's house'. The English civil servant Hugh Nevill, who wrote of the Rodiyas sixty years ago, tells a slightly different version. He says that among those who dined with the barber on the day he saw the finger of his child was a Kinnaraya, the King's mat-maker, and that it was he who wormed the secret out of the barber and subsequently informed the King. Further hostility toward the Kinnarayas is engendered by the legend that when the princess and her hunter were fleeing from Polonnaruwa they stopped at a Kinnaraya village to seek shelter for the night but were refused and driven off.

Fanciful as these tales are, they are not only believed by most of the village peoples of Ceylon but paradoxically enough are kept alive by the Rodiyas themselves. Rodiya women add the suffix Valli to their names, and Rodiya men the suffix Villiya, thus by their very designations conjuring up the awful deeds of their ancestors. Furthermore if it were not for the desire of most Rodiyas to live with their own people they would have no trouble in passing as high-caste people and handsome ones at that. According to Knox some of the best blood of the land flows in their veins. 'Many times when the King cuts off great and noble men, against whom he is highly incensed, he will deliver their wives and daughters unto this sort of people, reckoning it, as they also account it, to be far worse punishment than death.'

We left the hut of the headman and walked through the palm trees to another little clearing where we found a hut with a woman standing at the door nursing a child. She

was not a young woman but she had a lovely ravaged face with large expressive eyes and a slow wistful smile that in her youth must have moved men of all castes. The Rodiya women are famous for their dancing and she told me she used to dance at fairs and in the houses of rich men. In the days of the Kings Rodiya women were forbidden to wear anything above the waist, but this command is no longer observed. Raghavan told me that the current Sinhalese belief that all Rodiya women are necessarily of loose morals is untrue. Labouring under an age-old stigma, they simply earn money as best they can.

Sophia Ratna Valli, her husband and her two children eat only once a day. They have this meal in the late afternoon when the man returns from his begging or from rare jobs of sweeping. The food is always curry and rice and must sustain them for another twenty-four hours. During harvest time begging is easy and Sophia said her husband is given enough rice then to tide them over for some months to come. She showed me the *pingo*, the long pole with an open wicker basket at one end, with which he begs. Being considered unclean, the Rodiya cannot touch a high-caste person nor go into his house. Alms are dumped into his pingo. In thanks he chants the ancient prayer of the beggar, 'Devio Buddhawanto Hamudruvane' ('Godhead that you are, may you attain Buddhahood').

Although begging is the Rodiyas' primary means of existence, they are not without traditional skills, and make excellent brooms, fly-whisks and many kinds of drums. The *rabana*, the great kettledrums which are warmed over a fire and then played by the women of the Sinhalese villages, are often made by the Rodiyas. They also turn out *dlavas*, or small drums. Sheepskins are used for the drum-heads. Another interesting product is the *chamara*, or comb. Made from buffalo horns, which are cleverly heated, straightened and filed, these combs are beautifully designed. At best, however, the demand for these articles

is never great and the revenue derived from their sale helps only to eke out the Rodiyas' livelihood.

The Rodiyas are Buddhists, but, getting little attention from the Buddhist priesthood, they tend to feel isolated in their religious practices. Like most village people in Ceylon they also worship the principal Hindu deities such as Vishnu, Kataragama and Pattini, and perform *bali tovil* ceremonies. Kiri Sante, an old man we met at Talavitiya, is well versed in the propitiatory rituals to the nine planetary deities.

The ancient Rodiyan dialect is all but extinct, only a few of the older men still remembering scattered phrases of the language of their ancestors. Raghavan and Austin de Silva, librarian of the Colombo Museum, have made a study of it. Related to the primitive tribal dialects of India, the Rodiyan tongue has a limited vocabulary necessitating lengthy compounds in order to describe even such simple things as feet. *Bintalavve tavinena dagul degirava* literally translated means 'the two hands that go on the ground'. A necklace is *galle hapakarana teriange*, or 'that which makes the neck excellent'.

I was particularly interested in this dialect as it had many points of similarity with the language of the Moi tribes of French Indo-China, among whom I spent many months in 1935. The translation of the Moi word for mirror is 'hard water', and a mirror is similarly described in the Rodiyan idiom.

Marriage among the Rodiyans, as among the other Sinhalese, is usually arranged. Sophia told me that her marriage had been arranged through the *kapuwa*, or professional marriage-maker, who had convinced both her parents and those of her husband-to-be that the match was a good one. Subsequently both sets of parents visited and settled the affair even though the young couple had not yet set eyes upon each other. On the appointed day an elder of the village performed the Buddhist marriage ceremony

and tied the two little fingers of the bride and groom with a piece of thread. Then there was feasting — or as much feasting as the results of extra hard begging by all concerned justified. If the marriage is a *diga* marriage, the bride lives in the bridegroom's house; and if it is a *binna* marriage, she and her husband in her own house.

Raghavan told me later that when a Rodiya girl reaches puberty, her relatives are assembled and at the auspicious hour she is conducted by two of her nearest female relatives to a milk-giving tree. Her head is then covered with a cloth and she is given a ceremonial bath. When the cloth is removed, the first persons she sees are her paternal uncle and aunt. The relations then give her trinkets and a brass plate. No priest is present at the marriage or the death of a Rodiya, but Buddhist chants are sung at the former and Pali *gathas* at the latter.

The other Sinhalese still insist on utmost respect from the Rodiyas, and Sophia told us that recently a local landlord had refused to pay some women from her village for dancing because the drummers did not remove their headgear in the presence of the landlord. The show was filmed by a foreign company and many of the Rodiyas had travelled long distances in order to appear in it.

It was evening by the time I finished talking with Sophia and she had set about preparing the evening meal. I noted the brown rice and the chillies but there was nothing to go with them. I gave her eldest boy a few rupees and while he ran to the boutique to buy goat's meat, she sang an old Rodiya folk-song. Translated by Raghavan, the song ran:

Before the Lords of wealth assembled
I dance the alluring maiden dance,
Draped in new silk sari
Trailing down in folds of grace;
The golden bowls of swelling breasts
Excite the susceptible youthful mind;

I fear not the swaying dance
Out to please you with swinging gait.
Gifts I do seek, to dance and sing the more.
Pause not to take me by my hand
If so it pleases you Lords ;
The Lords unmoved I see, very pillars of virtue ;
'Tis time for me to leave
And of gifts I get none
And my evil Karma ever pursues me.

Hard as life is for the Rodiyas, their actual standard of living is probably not far below that of many Goyigama villages. Take the village of Konotte in the Kandyan foothills of North-western Province.

There are thirty-one families in Konotte. They are all Goyigama-caste farmers and depend entirely on crops for their livelihood. The total acreage under cultivation is about sixty, thirty of which are irrigated rice-fields and thirty are *chena* or unirrigated crops such as millet, green gram, maize, yams, gingali and other vegetables.

Rice or paddy is the mainstay of their existence ; at least one meal per day must be rice. The primary effort, therefore, is directed toward its cultivation and paddy culture depends basically on a regulated supply of water. Rain is trapped in a series of small tanks and fed out to the fields as the need arises. If insufficient rain falls, in the two monsoons, the rice crops fail and real privation follows.

The people are Buddhists and support, along with five other villages, a Buddhist bhikku, or priest. They go to occasional Buddhist ceremonies at the temple in the neighbouring village but some do not keep the strict tenets of the faith ; when hungry, they will eat meat and eggs which are forbidden. Underlying Buddhism, and perhaps equally important to the villagers, is the local god, Iyanaika Devio.

The greatest common denominator of the village of Konotte, however, is not what they grow nor what they believe in : it is poverty. They are poor, have always been

poor, and most probably will always be poor. As in many of the villages of Ceylon, the people simply never have quite enough to eat. There is never any outright starvation but always a degree of malnutrition due both to insufficient quantities and to vitamin deficiencies. Malnutrition is an insidious plague ; it shows up in the stunted growth of the children and in the lack of initiative in the elders.

There are degrees of poverty even in Konotte and, with my friend Abeysekera's help, I selected the richest and the poorest man in the village for special attention. Both are named Kiribanda.

Kiribanda Appuhamy is the richest man in the village. Appuhamy is not his surname but a title signifying a gentleman and, in his case, owing to his wealth, it means the first citizen of the village. He is a thin, rather weak-looking man of forty-one. He has a wife but no children and is constantly accusing her of being barren. She replies that the fault is his. He inherited most of his wealth but has been wise enough to hold on to it and even to increase it.

His position in the village is far more powerful than one at first realizes. Sitting on the porch of his mud and thatched cottage, in the flickering light of a kerosene lamp, I discovered that he is the only man in the village who can afford a newspaper. He subscribes to a Sunday paper and passes on the news to the rest of the village. A few of the elders can read but cannot afford the luxury of a paper ; Kiribanda is their sole source of outside news beyond the local gossip radius.

Politically, Kiribanda is a member of the United National Party, even though he does not know what it stands for. Questioned, he said that the M.P. for his district does very little for him and his village. He shows up at Konotte only every four years when he is running for office. He has no opposition. There is simply no one else to vote for. The whole question of government is, in fact, very obscure to Kiribanda. He has heard vaguely of

Communism but has no idea in what manner it differs from constitutional forms.

Kiribanda owns twenty of the sixty arable acres and, in addition, deals in coconuts and manages a small boutique in his house. He pays the Government twenty-five rupees (£1 : 17 : 6 or $5.00) per year to license his coconut shed and, apart from the nominal fees emanating from the licensing of carts, it is almost the only direct source of tax money in the village. There are, of course, purchase taxes on commodities.

Kiribanda's boutique has interesting ramifications. In this store he has the only surplus food available in the village, so, in times of hardship, he is in a position to demand exorbitant interest for the commodity loans he makes to the other villagers. I tried to pin him on the rates of interest he charged but succeeded only in learning that they varied according to whom the loan was made to. Even under the most favourable terms, however, the rate was around a hundred per cent per annum. I do not think, however, that he makes a practice of bleeding his fellow villagers. After all, he lives in Konotte and must depend on his neighbours for the usual relationships between people living together in small and more or less isolated communities.

An example of this dependence is disclosed in the necessity for guarding the fields from animals at night. Monkeys, wild pig and deer make heavy inroads on the growing crops. At forty-one Kiribanda is too old and feeble to watch his own fields and has no son to do it for him, so he must hire his neighbours' children.

A thousand-rupee community-well was constructed by the central Government. The contractor ran out of money before the well was completed and borrowed several hundred rupees from Kiribanda to finish the job. Nothing was put on paper, however, and when Kiribanda asked for his money, the city slicker asked him to prove the debt. In

the local court at Wariyapola, the case was thrown out. The people like to look at the well but would far rather have had the money for patching up their tanks. They have drunk tank water for generations ; in fact, they prefer it, saying that the well water has no taste!

Despite this invitation to disease, there is surprisingly little sickness in Konotte. Dr. Bryant Moore, who accompanied me on my visit to the village, said that the villagers have undoubtedly developed a tolerance for most of the illnesses that hit Europeans the hardest. Unless this were so, the consequences would be fatal, as the average villager is so under-nourished that his resistance is extremely low. Kiribanda himself has never had a serious illness but he looks much older than his age.

There is no entertainment in the life of the rich Kiribanda nor, for that matter, in any of the rest of his village. No musical instruments are played, no dancing is practised, no social life, beyond occasional gossip, is available.

Later that evening, Kiribanda the poor, with his family, came to call and be interviewed. He is a sad picture. Naked except for a gee-string and thin to a point where his little arms are not as big as my eleven-year-old daughter's, he wears his hair long and tied up in a mangy bun behind. His expression is about as hopeless as one can imagine. He is forty-three and looks about sixty.

His family also presents a pathetic picture. Neither his wife, who is a dull-looking village girl of thirty, nor his children, who have the pinched expressions of nervous ill-health, could possibly be described as even reasonably contented people. There are four living children and one dead one. Questioned as to whether she hoped to have more children, the wife drew herself up with some pride and said she hoped so. The implications of another mouth to feed seemed not to trouble her. They should have, because the case of the poor Kiribanda is just a shade ahead of the desperate. If it were not for Abeysekera's generosity

in giving him a job, he and his family would starve. He has no place of his own and squats on two and a half acres of Government land where he raises a few yams and bananas. He has applied to the Agent to be granted this land but has received no reply in the past year. As he is weak from malnutrition and as he owns no farm implements, it is doubtful if he will ever be able to raise sufficient crops to keep his family on even a minimum diet. Abeysekera pays him ten rupees each week (15s. or $2.00), and even this is an over-payment as he works only occasionally and does little but guard the crops. He spends his salary as follows: 4.68 rupees, or nearly half of his stipend, goes for rice; flour accounts for 3 rupees more; and the balance is spent in driblets for sugar, salt, dried fish, soap and curry powder. Apart from the small amount of fat provided in coconut milk, neither he nor his family get any fats at all. Although, nominally, a good Buddhist, Kiribanda does eat meat when it is given to him. His eldest son also eats it, but his wife refuses to eat it and will not permit the other children to indulge either.

Almost all the clothes the family possesses are on their backs. Kiribanda owns one sarong in addition to his gee-string, and his wife has two blouses and a sarong; the children each have a small and dirty shirt.

Medical care is at a minimum; there is a village mid-wife, actually an untrained woman who is willing to do this work in addition to running her own family and who functions for a charge of two rupees. She is booked in advance for ten Ceylon cents and a betel leaf. In other medical crises, the help of the village ayurvedic practitioner is usually called upon. If he fails to effect a cure and the patient still lives, he can be taken to the Government hospital at Kurunegala. The hospital health service is technically free but both Kiribandas told me it is necessary to pay the dispenser in order to get medicine from him.

Kiribanda, the poor, does not now burn a candle to

Iyanaika Devio. He feels that the village Devio is not very efficacious. Recently a viper came into the village and killed a child. After that tragedy virtually every house burned a candle to the jungle god. Either the Devio was asleep or the snakes were invaded by even stronger spirits because several more vipers put in an appearance. Poor Kiribanda then put out his candle.

At the other extreme of the Goyigama economic ladder are the Kandyan nobility and, as a guest of Senerat Rajabosinha, we saw something of another ancient way of life. The Rajabosinha's *walawa*, or mansion, situated about seven miles from Kandy, was built in the lush days of the 1920s and erected on the premise that the owner would always be able to call on the services of at least twenty-five servants to run it. Huge living-rooms with decorated columns, a fountain on the second floor and three sets of stairways, give some idea of the scale. Yet such was the hospitality of our hosts that even this ornate setting failed to stiffen the atmosphere.

Following a sumptuous dinner, Rajabosinha announced that the dancers were at the portico and we took our seats to witness a private showing of the best Kandyan dancing I ever expect to see. These dancers are not professionals but peasants who learn the art as a side-line and do it because they love it. It takes ten to fifteen years to qualify as a dancer and years of saving to afford the heavy silver bangles that a dancer must wear. All the dancers are male. The only music comes from two three-foot drums, the singing of the dancers themselves and the clash of their ornaments.

Leader of the dancing team was Rangamore, a wiry man of fifty-two, who enjoys the reputation of being among the three top dancers on the Island. He was assisted by two other dancers, one of whom, by his lack of silver hat, signified that he was still a novitiate in the art.

The drums throbbed and the dancers, after first bowing

The Kandyan dancers

low to Rajabosinha (his father had taken Rangamore to England for the coronation of King George VI), moved into the first series of their routine. The dance is known as the 'Dance of the Hawk' and in their posturings they vividly portrayed the flight and dive of the sky killer. Next came the 'Dance of the Hare' and, lastly, the 'Dance of the Elephant'. The movements of the huge pachyderms were simulated to a point where we could clearly visualize the majestic walk of the king of the jungles.

The Rajabosinhas maintain a baby elephant which wanders into the dining-room during breakfast and lunch and goes to each guest for a banana. She does not grab, simply raises her trunk and waits to be fed. My daughter, Mary, climbed on her back with the help of the mahout. Captured in the jungle at one of the last elephant kraals, or drives, to be held in Ceylon, when she was only a year old, the calf is not yet six and stands about seven feet high.

We visited the temple of Lankatileka, a six-hundred-year-old shrine hidden in the hills some ten miles from Kandy. One of the ranking high priests of Ceylon has this temple assigned to him as his personal chapel and, at Rajabosinha's request, he came specially from Kandy to greet us and show us around. The temple is on top of a long, long flight of steps cut in the living rock. A simpler building than most of the Buddhist temples, the shrine of whitewashed brick is one of the loveliest on the Island. There is only one room, in which there is a ten-foot gilded statue of the Buddha. The walls are painted with pictures of the life of the Master. The high priest showed us many objects of interest, including an ancient flag captured from the Dutch, and some fabulous old books bound in gold and ivory.

In the late afternoon, at the Temple of the Tooth, two saffron-robed bhikkus pulled aside a green velvet curtain inscribed with the Gold Lion of Lanka, and revealed the inner sanctum of the holiest relic in the Buddhist world.

On a raised platform behind glass rests a dagoba-shaped bell of solid gold draped with chains of sparkling jewels. There are seven such caskets, nesting within each other, and in the centre lies the ivory relic believed by millions of Buddhists to be the tooth of the gentle sage, whose philosophy, as I noted above, denies the very idea of caste.

Chapter XVI

THE MALDIVE ISLANDS

SOME four hundred miles south-west of Ceylon, in the blue expanse of the Indian Ocean, lie a dozen clusters of coral atolls known as the Maldive Islands. Though the inhabited land area is only about a hundred and fifteen square miles, the two thousand plus islands of the archipelago are scattered, like the Milky Way, over fifty thousand square miles of sea, and the populated islands, by recent count numbering two hundred and fifteen, range from Addu Atoll on the Equator to Tiladumnati Atoll at 7° North latitude, a distance of more than four hundred and seventy miles.

So remote are the Maldives that most map-makers designate them, incorrectly, as possessions of either the United Kingdom or of Ceylon. In fact the islands are fully independent, although by treaty they are under the protection of Her Majesty the Queen and their foreign relations are conducted through the British High Commissioner in Ceylon. This arrangement, which in no way affects the internal affairs of the Maldives, was originally defined in an exchange of letters between Queen Victoria and the Sultan, Mohamed Mu'in-ud-din II, in 1887, and has since been renewed several times.

Even the traditional 'tribute', which the Sultans used to send as a graceful gesture to the King of England, was done away with in 1950. This tribute, consisting of rolls of Maldivian mats, lacquer-work, sweetmeats, shells and a small quantity of ambergris, was presented, in Colombo, in November and was an occasion for old-world pageantry and pomp. An exchange of compliments took place

between the Maldivian representative and the Governor and a letter from the Sultan was ceremoniously presented. The Governor, in his turn, sent back to the Sultan many of the products of Ceylon and a similar letter of felicitations.

The first settlers of the archipelago are said to have migrated from Ceylon about the time of Christ, and crumbling dagobas, on some of the islands, clearly indicate that the people were formerly Buddhists. Later, they were converted to Islam in the twelfth century and today's eighty thousand inhabitants are all Moslems of the strict Sunni sect. Perhaps because of their firm faith and perhaps because of their isolation, there has never been a case on record of Communist penetration.

Among the few outsiders who visited the Maldives and left records of their journeys was the famous Arabian explorer Ibn Battuta (1325–1354), who lived for a number of years at Male, the capital, and in fact married three wives there. Next to visit the islands were the Portuguese who held them for a brief period before they were finally driven out in 1650 during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Ibrahim I.

The Frenchman Pyrard, who was shipwrecked for five years on the Maldives in the early years of the seventeenth century, left us a vivid account of the islanders' life. Basically, there appears to be little change in the life of these hardy fishermen since that time.

The standard work is, of course, that of H. C. P. Bell, late of the Ceylon Civil Service, who devoted many years to his monumental monograph on the Maldives. Lighter but also rewarding reading is *The Two Thousand Isles* by T. W. Hockley, an Englishman still living in Ceylon, who took a trip to the Maldives by buggalow twenty years ago.

The political history of the islands has been far from serene and a goodly number of the ninety-two Sultans and Sultanas who from time to time have ruled at Male were

exiled or otherwise disposed of. The Sultanate form of government lasted until late in 1952, even though it had been an elected office since 1930.

In the spring of 1952, the last Sultan designate, H.H. Amir Abdul Majid Didi, died in Ceylon, and Amir Amin Didi, the Prime Minister, who had actually been running the government anyway, proposed that the islands become a republic and he was subsequently elected president by an almost unanimous vote. At this point it might be well to add that, since time immemorial, the government of the islands has been in the hands of the nobility of Male, most of whom hold the title of 'Didi'.

The inauguration of the new republic was held on January 1, 1953, at Male, and was attended by Sir Cecil Syers, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Ceylon, as well as by a representative of the Ceylon Government. Curiously enough, an examination of the new constitution revealed that, unlike its predecessor, it made little or no reference to the rights of the people.

By any standards Amin Didi was a remarkable man and, by Maldivian standards, a veritable superman. He wanted to project his country from the fifteenth to the twentieth century in the shortest possible time and firmly believed that all means to this end were justified. As a member of a family that has supplied all the Maldivian Sultans since 1759, he had no difficulties in getting the people to go along with him, and certainly his initial reforms were good for the country. He reorganized the school system, extended the franchise to women, built an electrical generating plant that furnished power to the capital, made Male one of the cleanest cities in the world and retained a first-class Ceylonese doctor to attack the health problem.

Sir Cecil Syers, who knew him at this time, described him as an intelligent, progressive, liberal-minded man of forty-two, who threw himself wholeheartedly into every phase of Maldivian life, even to playing centre-forward in

the football team. This opinion was shared, with only one exception, by everyone with whom I talked who knew him during this period. There is reason to believe, in fact, that he had a Jekyll and Hyde personality that he was careful to guard from foreigners, and it was only by chance that Joe Brown, the *Time* correspondent who went along with the High Commissioner's party, got an inkling of the less pleasant side of his strange character.

At the same time that Amin Didi was instituting the worth-while reforms, he was embarking on a series of other radical changes that were eventually to drive him from the presidency. Like most dictators, he could brook no opposition and, in order to impress this simple fact on the people, he restored the ancient Islamic penal code which allowed for the cutting-off of hands for theft. Several such operations were personally supervised by the president. When told by his doctor not to smoke, he forbade the import of tobacco on pain of banishment and gave his people a year to stop smoking for good.

These were minor irritations, however, and it was not until the president embarked on road-building on a wide scale that he earned the real hatred of the populace. As can well be imagined, there is not the slightest reason to build roads on tropical islands, most of which are less than a mile long and half a mile wide. Shady paths between the coconut and breadfruit trees are all that the people want or need. Amin Didi, however, liked good broad avenues of the Champs Élysées style and gave orders that every inhabited island must have such a boulevard. As a result, thousands of precious food-bearing trees were cut down and, in place of the cool lanes of former days, the people were faced with a vast dusty swath stretching from one shore of their island to the other.

Not only did the islanders lose their fruit but the work entailed in chopping down the trees took the men from fishing, their main source of livelihood. Bonito, caught by

rod and reel, dried and shipped to Ceylon as 'Maldive fish', a popular condiment in curries, is the base of the Maldivian economy. The proceeds of these fish sales are used to buy rice, and when the catch is reduced the islands experience dire privation. After the road-building spree, several thousand people were reported to be on the edge of starvation and would undoubtedly have perished if the Pakistan Government had not generously given the islands 7,000 bags of rice.

The inevitable result of this sad state of affairs was the non-violent revolution of September 4, 1953. The president was away in India for his health when the people gathered at Male and requested Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi, Minister without portfolio, and Mr. Mohamed Didi, vice-president, to suspend the constitution and take over the government. On Amin Didi's return, he was arrested on his aircraft and sent in protective custody to the near-by island of Doonidu, in order to save him from the population of Male.

Such was the situation when I requested my friend, the Acting High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Ceylon, to arrange for my wife and me to meet Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi who was then staying at the Maldivian representative's house in Colombo. The Joint Chief of State turned out to be a charming old-world gentleman who most courteously said he would do all in his power to facilitate our trip to the islands.

Although the Maldives are in the consular district of the American Embassy, I told Mr. Didi that the purpose of the trip was purely for pleasure and that I would appreciate it if he would consider it an unofficial visit.

The usual way to reach Male, the capital of the Maldives, however, was by buggalow, native schooners, whose voyages, depending on the monsoons, could take from a week to more than a month. Flying was the obvious answer and we were lucky enough to find that a Royal Air

Force Sunderland flying boat was about to visit the islands to bring back Mr. Charles Cruickshank, the British Trade Commissioner in Ceylon, who was studying the economic difficulties of the islands at the invitation of the Maldivian Government. Air Commodore Joseph Cox, O.B.E., D.F.C., was kind enough to offer my wife and me seats in the aircraft. Accordingly, on Monday, December 14, 1953, our party boarded the Sunderland at the China Bay dock of the British naval base at Trincomalee. The captain, Flight-Lieutenant Donald Brian Robinson, had his crew lined up smartly on the wing. I rose and took the salute. We took off at nine-thirty and had some bad weather for the first two hours of the flight. Then the clouds cleared and we sailed along over a deep-blue ocean. An excellent breakfast and light luncheon were served on board. At twelve-thirty we made a landfall on Mirupiri Island, then coasted down the reef to Male. The approach was a glorious sight: many shades of green, ranging from aquamarine on the outer reefs to the lightest of jewel jade nearer the islands themselves. We flew over many small atolls, most of which appeared to be uninhabited.

By one p.m. we were over Male and after circling several times came down for a fine landing just outside the breakwater. The state barge, rowed by twelve blue-turbaned oarsmen, came alongside. In the stern sheets were Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi and Mr. Cruickshank. Landing at the wharf, we were met by Mr. Mohamed Didi and other principal members of the Government, while crowds of islanders peered from every available vantage point. Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi then escorted us to two waiting cars, the only two on the island or, for that matter, on the Maldives, and we were driven to the new palace, a trip of not more than a quarter of a mile.

A relatively new building, the palace has every modern convenience from comfortable furniture to bathrooms. In the main hall are pictures of the Sultans, the various

outstanding Didis, the British monarchs, Lord Louis Mountbatten, and a signed photograph of President Roosevelt in appreciation of the kindness shown by the Maldivians to American merchant marines torpedoed during the late war. There is also a fine new throne and a musical box.

After we had had a nap, Mohamed Ibrahim Didi, son of the Joint Chief of State and Postmaster General in his own right, took us for a personally conducted tour. The town of Male is only about a mile long by half a mile wide and occupies the entire island. It is the cleanest metropolis I have ever seen. No domestic animals, except cats, are allowed in the town proper ; it is forbidden to import dogs and the small herd of Government-owned cows and goats are kept in an outlying field. The streets all have numbers and are made of white sand. The bases of the street lights are old Portuguese cannon. The town is divided into four wards and each ward has its own football field and club-house. In one such recreation building I saw a heated game of table tennis. The water-front is picturesque with many native fishing boats moored inside the breakwater. Fish are so plentiful that several fishermen were hauling in a small type of silver smelt from the harbour itself. They used no bait, simply jigged bare hooks on the ends of their lines.

We visited the graves of the two major Moslem saints and the old Portuguese fort at the harbour mouth, whose cannon bore the arms of the Portuguese kings. Everywhere we went, the people gathered in orderly crowds and stared. They seldom smiled but did not appear in any sense sullen. The women wear dresses, not saris. Occasionally we saw quite pretty young girls. Our guide told me that only the upper classes still observe purdah and that the great majority of the inhabitants of Male have one wife only.

Men of the lower classes wear a sarong from the waist down and either a cotton singlet or nothing above. Most wear a cotton cloth twisted in their hair as a protection

against the sun. They never wear shoes nor carry an umbrella; these appurtenances were formerly considered the privileges of rank along with the wearing of black silk or alpaca cloth coats and the taboo still seems to be observed. The upper classes wear more ornate sarongs and European-type shirts with the tails worn outside and gold studs instead of buttons. Everyone of any pretensions wears a Moslem cap made of dyed wool at all times; wrist-watches and Parker pens are also much in evidence among the richer men.

The car came for us at the old Portuguese wall at the far end of the island and drove us home. Despite the fact that there was only one other car on the island and a very remote chance that that car would be coming behind us, the chauffeur invariably put out the turning marker when he rounded a corner.

On our tour I was particularly impressed by the number of graveyards and shrines, or *ziarets*. They seemed to take up much of the available housing space. They are neatly maintained, however, with white flags floating over many of them. The tombstones of the men have pointed ends and those of women rounded ones. The mosques have beautiful blue screens in the windows. All the houses are enclosed behind whitewashed coral walls of about five feet in height.

One of the dubious civic improvements inaugurated by Mr. Amin Didi was the construction of four large playing-fields, one in each of the wards. In order to make these fields, he ordered several hundred homes to be razed. The people do not particularly like football and, since Mr. Didi's exile, there has been a steadily declining interest in the sport. The indigenous games take only a small amount of space.

Next morning we boarded the Government launch *Hyacinth*, churned out of the harbour at a steady five knots and headed up the line of islands, inside the reef of Male

atoll. A very comfortable launch of sixty feet, built in Devon before the war, the craft, which is the only motor-propelled vessel in the Maldives, leads a busy life plying between the far-flung islands. The captain, Mohamed Maniku, let me steer it. Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi, our official guide, young Mohamed Didi, Mr. and Mrs. Cruickshank and my own party made up the expedition.

A glaring example of the road-building activities of Mr. Amin Didi soon loomed up on the starboard side. The island looked as if a giant knife had sliced a clean gash across its middle. On this island alone, I was told, more than five hundred coconut and breadfruit trees had been cut down. So furious were the people at this useless avenue that they never used it if they could help it.

Sitting on the bow, with the clear blue water of the Indian Ocean foaming away on either side, I learned more of the troubles that the people had suffered at the hands of Mr. Amin Didi. I asked specifically about the cutting-off of hands and was told that there were three men whose right hands had been cut off by Mr. Amin Didi's order. The victims, it is true, were caught in a theft, but in all the years of the Sultanate this ancient Islamic punishment had never been invoked. Lashing or exile was usually the sentence for evildoers and I gathered that even this form of retribution was mildly administered. Theft, in fact, was almost unknown on the islands until the recent starvation stimulated it.

Discussing customs, Ibrahim Ali Didi said that on the outlying islands wives shared property equally with their husbands. This is only logical as the women of the islands work as hard as their men. Only in Male, where the women lead idle lives, do the old Moslem inheritance laws of one-eighth prevail. He said that there has never been any real purdah on the islands except in the case of the upper classes. Maldivian 'ladies' still remain indoors.

I asked about the various types of boats I had seen in

the harbour. Largest is the buggalow, a two-masted, lateen-rigged vessel of about a hundred tons. These are made in India and sail to Ceylon with Maldive fish. Next in size is the *battely*, which is a smaller, island-built version of the buggalow. They also sail to Ceylon. The two types of fishing boats are the *ody*, a lateen-rigged, single-masted craft, and the *dhoni*, a smaller version of the *ody*. On most islands are shipwrights who make the vessels out of local timber. Three of the best kinds of wood for ships

The buggalow

are kirdu, cani and madoti. Wooden nails are used. Up to sixty years ago the sails were of rattan, but since then sail-cloth has been imported from abroad.

Four types of bonito are used in the preparation of 'Maldive fish': the canely, a fish with no stripes; the ragony, a spotted variety somewhat smaller than the canely; the catibilo, the true bonito; and the lati, closely resembling the catibilo but having a narrower tail. Only these four species are dried and exported as 'Maldive fish'. Sword-fish, marlin and tuna are all caught in the Maldives, the larger varieties being harpooned. Some whales are harpooned in the central group of atolls. The fishing is never good all over the 470-mile chain of islands at the same time. During the south-west monsoon it is good in the central group, and during the north-east monsoon in the northern and southern groups. There is some migration between islands for the purpose of following the fish.

At noon we landed at the island of Hura, a coral strip about half a mile long by perhaps a quarter of a mile wide. Hura is a famous island as it is the place from which came the family of the islands' last line of Sultans and also of Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi himself. Due to shallowing water, we had to anchor the *Hyacinth* far out and we were rowed in by a six-oared dhoni. I took the helm from the headman, Hussein. The population of 190 souls was down on the beach to meet us. Unlike the somewhat effete types of Male, they were a virile-looking lot but obviously poorly fed. When we were half-way to the beach, it started pouring, and by the time we landed we were soaked and so repaired immediately to a boatshed to dry out; there we were presented with some lovely cowries, the shells which were once used for money throughout the islands and in lower India. I asked to see a fishing-rod and hook and was shown a most serviceable outfit. The pole was bamboo, light but strong, the line was made of jute and the hook was home-bent iron. There was no barb as this

type of hook is used for jigging. The haft is elongated and painted with lime to simulate a small fish.

The dhoni that fetched us to the beach was a new one and had been made on the island. The nails were made from the corady tree, a very hard type of wood. About thirty feet long and about six feet in the beam, the boat was beautifully finished ; the prow was high in the manner of a Viking ship and there was a high rear platform for the passengers to sit on.

In addition to dried fish, the islanders export small quantities of coir rope which they weave from coconut husks. So strong is this rope that it stands up to strains better than manila and so has a good market in southern India and Ceylon. Small amounts of lacquer-work and some ambergris are also exported. The ambergris, which is a valuable perfume base, is vomited up by sperm whales and is found either floating or cast up on the beaches. A monopoly of the Government, it is all sold in Bombay. In bygone days the Maldives were an important source of pearls but the art of diving for them has died out.

Amin Didi's order to cut a straight path through the middle of all islands was frustrated on this one by a substantial rest-house built by the last Sultan. Not even the president dared order the house to be destroyed, so only half of the avenue was completed. Many other substantial coral houses were torn down, however, and the stumps of coconut and breadfruit trees testify to the folly of the late president's scheme.

We proceeded through the showers to the Sultan's house and were given glasses of delicious toddy by the headman. Great bunches of green coconuts were presented to us, despite Mr. Didi's and my own request that they save their food. The islanders obviously held the old gentleman in great esteem and seemed genuinely happy to see him again.

Hima-furi, the next island we visited, was one of those

where the famine had been very severe and the children still showed signs of malnutrition. An epidemic of influenza was raging and the inmates of many of the houses lay coughing on their raised rattan couches. Musa, the headman, was a most intelligent-looking old man. When I say headman, I mean the senior or religious leader of the village. There is also in every village an administrative headman who ranks as deputy leader. The religious headman, or *khateeb*, is also the judge as he is the man most familiar with Moslem law.

While we were walking down the shore under the leaning trunks of the coconut palms, I noticed two duck-like birds pinwheel in and land on the lagoon. They were, in fact, a type of pintail which during the north-west monsoon migrates from India to the Maldives. The islanders have no guns but have evolved a unique manner of taking the quarry. They fashion a type of basket which fits over their heads and then stalk the birds under this camouflage, being careful never to show any of their persons above water. The ducks are used to seeing fishing baskets anchored on the tidal flats and pay no attention to them. When the islanders have approached within grabbing distance, they reach up under the water and, seizing the ducks by the feet, pull them under the water and drown them. A good morning's duck-stalking can account for a dozen birds.

Apart from ducks, there are green pigeon on some of the islands and, strangely enough, both rabbits and hares. No one seems to know where the rabbits came from. The hares are indigenous to India and explainable. The islanders trap both species.

After dinner in Male that evening, I strolled down the main street and called on Dr. R. E. W. Jehoratnam, the Government physician. He proved to be a courteous and intelligent Tamil from Jaffna, Ceylon, and was able to give me a great deal of information on the health situation. I had been told by various officers of the Government that

the rice ration consisted of $7\frac{1}{2}$ measures per adult per month. Everyone over three is considered an adult. Since there are roughly $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds to the measure, this meant that the ration amounted to $11\frac{1}{4}$ pounds of rice per month.

The doctor told me that he considered the minimum rice ration for a working fisherman, and his equally hard-working wife, to be a half-measure or three-quarters of a pound of rice per meal. As the people eat only two meals per day, this means that to stay reasonably fit they should receive a pound and a half of rice per day, or approximately 45 pounds per month. They were getting less than a quarter of this amount.

He also said that there is a serious vegetable deficiency in their present diet, which results in many cases of scurvy and beri-beri. Mothers are almost universally unable to suckle their babies, and as there are no dairy animals and no canned milk, the babies must subsist as best they can on congey, a type of fish soup, and unfermented toddy. The retarded growth of many of the children that I saw bore sad testimony to the truth of his remarks.

He was most anxious to secure vitamins and canned milk from the World Health Organization and I promised him to do what I could to promote speedy results. He also wanted to borrow some of our U.S. Information Service films for teaching purposes and I agreed to send them. Fighting a good battle for the health of the islanders, I felt he should get all the help I could give him.

There is some malaria on the islands and a good deal of tuberculosis; both of these diseases, the doctor felt, only became really dangerous when the health of the people became undermined by starvation, as was the case during the past two years. He added that the corrugated-tin roofs, with which many of the island huts are covered, contribute to tuberculosis. The old thatch roofs allowed the earthen floors under them to dry, but the tin roofs effectually hold out the sun, with the result that the ground is

always damp. Tuberculosis is more common among the well-to-do classes of Male who keep their women and children inside, than among the islanders who spend most of their time out in the sun.

Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi's fears that the morals of the nation were heading downwards were supported by the doctor, who said that the venereal disease rate was relatively high. There was little outright prostitution but considerable playing around among the lower classes, where the women are not kept in purdah and where the long absences of husbands on fishing trips led to temptation. Incidentally, any babies born during a husband's absences are legally his, no matter how long he stays away. Divorce is quite common and can be had by either party for a nominal sum if the religious head of the island feels it is warranted. It is always necessary, however, to wait three months before granting any divorce, to see whether or not the woman is pregnant. If she is, a divorce cannot be granted until the arrival of the child.

The doctor said that more girl babies are born than males and attributed this to waning vitality in the men, due to malnutrition.

As there are too few houses for the population, many families consist of not only the head of the house and his wife but his younger brothers and their wives also. This overcrowding has, of course, a bad effect on health. There are a few cases of leprosy but they are concentrated on two of the islands. All houses belong to the Government but are passed from father to son, with the permission of the governing authority.

The doctor treated Mr. Amin Didi for high blood pressure and his consequent stroke. It was not until after he had recovered from the stroke that Mr. Didi did the things which were ultimately to cost him his position as president. The doctor said that a person often becomes very sentimental during the time he has a stroke and can

veer to near sadism when he recovers from it. Mr. Amin Didi's orders to cut off the hands of the thieves followed almost immediately on his recovery.

The doctor himself is a most interesting man. Educated at St. John's College in Jaffna and the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Calcutta, he practised for twenty years in Jaffna. Then he suffered a bad broken leg and was laid up for two years. Following his recovery he decided to accept Mr. Amin Didi's invitation to come to the Maldives on a five-year contract as the Government doctor. He has now been in Male three years and says that his ideas have changed radically. Instead of trying to change everything he sees, he acknowledges that there is considerable virtue in many of the ayurvedic practices of the native doctors ; he tries, in fact, to fuse his knowledge of Western medicine with that of the ayurvedic system which he learned in the Hindu University, Benares, and the arts of indigenous medicine practised by the islanders.

In the bright light of the tropical morning, we set sail in a dhoni for an inspection of the shipping. There were two brigs belonging to the Maldivian Government and three buggalows. We boarded the *Faith Hulbari*, an hermaphrodite-rigged ship of perhaps five hundred tons. She lacked paint but was clean as a whistle, and the captain received us at the gangway in a manner that would have done credit to Her Majesty's Navy. She carried a crew of nineteen and was loading for a trip to Ceylon.

We then boarded the Government buggalow *Ganga Fathurradam* and were received by Captain Mohamed Jaman. His vessel was low in the water with cargo for Colombo, consisting of 2,000 bags of 126 pounds each, containing dried fish. The trip usually takes about twelve days. The buggalow, built in India, was eighty feet long by about twenty feet in the beam and was rigged with two huge lateen sails ; she carried a crew of twenty-one. The

only modern instrument I could find on her was a compass at the wheel.

Following the inspections, we sailed over to Hulule island where a battely was being built; nine carpenters under a head carpenter were working on her. The construction job was nearly finished and had taken eleven months. Built entirely of teak, she was a beautiful job. Smaller than a buggalow, but the largest vessel built in the Maldives, the battely runs to less than a hundred tons but is an imposing-looking craft with adequate cabin room and efficient-looking holds. The head shipwright received thirty rupees per month (five Maldivian rupees equal one Ceylon rupee or about four U.S. cents or twopence). The junior workers get twenty Maldivian rupees per month.

Hulule island is inhabited by only about sixty people, as it is a Government island used primarily for the growing of coconut and breadfruit. Despite this fact Mr. Amin Didi caused his workmen to cut a great east-west road across it, although many valuable food trees were cut down in the process. He also had a football field constructed, but both the field and the road are now rapidly growing up in jungle.

Later we swam in the limpid waters of the lagoon and gathered lovely sea shells. Fresh coconuts quenched our thirst and Irene got some wonderful pictures of the boat-building.

In the early afternoon we drove to the bazaar. I have mentioned already that Male is less than a mile long and the bazaar is only a few hundred yards from the palace, but whenever we ventured out the faithful Mohamed Didi was ready with both cars for the journey. The bazaar is run mainly by several hundred *borahs*, or Indian merchants.

At three o'clock Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi met us and escorted us to the old Sultan's Palace, part of which had been turned into a museum by Mr. Amin Didi. Most interesting were the old thrones, burnished copper guns and fine examples of ancient lacquer-work. The palace,

known as *Mathige* or the house of two stories, is a really fascinating pile. Built over two hundred years ago in the reign of Sultan Mu'in-ud-din, it is constructed entirely of teak with a copper roof. The main bathroom, reserved for the Sultan's personal use, consists of a graceful pool with steps down into it and a stone seat in the middle of the water. There are two audience halls, one for state occasions and another for receiving lesser fry.

While walking through the old halls, I asked Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi the name of the last Sultan to occupy the palace and found that it was the same Hassein Nuradin who abdicated during the late war and is still living in Male. He abdicated because he could not stomach the reforms of Mr. Amin Didi, the then Prime Minister!

In the courtyard was drawn up the Maldivian band, and a most impressive sight it was. Under the aegis of a seventy-four-year-old band-leader named Hadji Adam Halafan were seven quaintly garbed musicians: two played upon curious trumpet-shaped horns with holes in them like flutes; two were armed with equally antique types of clarinets and there were three drummers. The drums were beautifully lacquered instruments of considerable size and powerful resonance. They played the national anthem and then several old Maldivian songs. Last they played the war march, the same martial music that preceded the famous battle with the Portuguese in 1573 when the islanders rose and massacred the garrison to a man.

Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi then led us to an open court where he had ordered the artisans to show us how lacquer-work is done. The goblets and vases were turned on hand lathes; one man pulled ropes which turned the article and another handled the cutting tool. The colours were applied in the same manner from sticks of local pigment.

In the late afternoon I inspected the Male schools. There are four primary schools, one for each ward of the city, and a high school. The boys study from nine to

eleven and from two to five, and the girls use the same buildings from seven to ten at night. Up to the time of Mr. Amin Didi, there was no education for girls. The schools are free and bright children from the outer islands are brought to Male for their high school education. Ten subjects are taught, ranging from sacred studies of the Koran to 'general knowledge'. In one of the schools, a youth of seventeen was teaching this latter subject. The schools are very clean and the boys of each ward wear different-coloured caps on their little heads. On the whole the children are small, a boy of ten being about the size of an American child of six.

After dinner we re-inspected the same five schools, but this time they were full of girls. In most cases the same men teachers were taking the classes but there were a few school-marms added. Prominent among these was the daughter of Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi, who was educated in Cairo and speaks excellent English. The students ranged from tiny little girls to almost the marriageable age. Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi told me that formerly girls were married at fourteen but now there is a law prohibiting marriage under the age of eighteen. Married women who receive their husband's permission may attend the school, but I saw no such matrons in any of the classrooms. The Maldivian women wear a curious type of old-fashioned, long-sleeved dress, not a sari; it has a broad white collar, is fitted at the waist and has no belt. On festive occasions, a chain of old silver coins is added. Although the Maldivian women of the lower classes have never been in purdah, they are not supposed to smile at strange men; only the little girls risked outright smiles. Everyone was in their best clothes for the occasion and appeared delighted when Irene and Cruickshank took flash-bulb pictures of them.

Mohamed Didi, in his capacity of Postmaster General, presented each of us with all the stamps ever issued by the

Maldive Government. Collectors would be delighted with them and I suggested that, instead of merely two issues, he should put out many and sell them like the Principality of Liechtenstein.

While the girls took some more photographs of the town, Mohamed and I visited some of the ministries. Our first call was at the Ministry of Communications. The Minister himself was an appointee of Mr. Amin Didi and thence was in exile on one of the outlying islands, but the Number Two showed us around. The ministry has two main activities — running the radio and organizing the telephone system. There are two radio operators whose only apparent work is to send regular weather reports to Colombo and to notify the Maldivian Trading Corporation there of the arrival of the fish buggalows. A good deal of money could be made by allowing the borah merchants to use the set commercially while charging them a good price. Mr. Amin Didi, however, did not like the Indian merchants and did not let them use his radio facilities.

There are seventeen telephone receivers which link the various Government departments as well as the houses of a few of the nobility. Since none of the departments are more than a block away from each other, this is an entirely unwarranted extravagance, but Mr. Amin Didi put them in.

Next call was at the Government printing office where all types of Government work, including the two official publications, are printed. The press is an ancient flat-bed affair made by Waterlow & Son of London in 1900, but it is still quite able to cope with the islands' press problems. The newspaper comes out once a month; the editor is Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi but the actual work is done by the managing editor, Mr. Mohamed Jameel Didi. Subjects covered are religious news, sports, foreign news and 'small fictions'. There are about twenty contributors from all the islands. The managing editor told me that he could print the paper as often as once a week if he had the paper.

There is also a literary magazine which comes out every two months. All the school books are also printed at the plant.

Across a courtyard from the printing office is the court-house where a lively divorce case was in progress. The chief justice, or *qazi*, was in exile, by request of the new Government, but the acting chief justice was most kind and told me something of his work. Evidently crime is much more prevalent in Male than one would think; he admitted being far behind on his calendar.

The Moslem code of laws is rigidly followed in most cases and the punishment for adultery consists of whipping the guilty person with a thong. This instrument of retribution is called the *durra* and is made up of three layers of leather bolted together by flat brass studs. It is about two-and-a-half feet long and can inflict a severe beating. While the durra is usually administered to lady sinners it can also be applied to men.

Mr. Amin Didi's unpopular cutting-off of right hands and the death penalty have been rescinded but the scale of punishment is still rather more severe than ours. Exile is the punishment most used and, since this does not include one's family, it works a real hardship.

Sailing out for our morning swim on Hulule island, we passed Doonidu where Mr. Amin Didi was in exile. One of the boatmen had been on Doonidu since the former president was incarcerated there and told me that he was guarded by five soldiers and had six servants to minister to his wants. Contrary to newspaper reports, he had not been allowed to see his family, who were living in Male. The general opinion seemed to be that he would be exiled for life to Mulaku island in the southern group. This is the island where the recalcitrant Sultans were always sent. It has a population of 1,500 and, next to Male, has probably the most comfortable living in the chain.

The more I saw of Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi, the more I

liked and respected him. A doctor of Arab medicine and a deeply religious classical scholar as well, he is one of the finest old-fashioned gentlemen I have ever met. He is genuinely devoted to his people and gave up his dreams of retirement and research in order to try to pull them out of their present dilemma. He is endeavouring to preserve the old arts and is personally responsible for reviving the band. The old band-leader, by the way, has served under three Sultans and is the only man on the island who remembers the old tunes. Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi is also fostering the lacquer-work and consulted me several times on possible markets for this fine native handicraft. His basic objective, however, is to restore the character of his people. He said to me that never before, in the eight hundred years of the Sultanate, had his country borrowed money, and that he felt a deep personal shame at this lack of national independence.

He was referring to the million-rupee loan which Mr. Amin Didi negotiated with the Ceylonese Government and which the Maldivian Government has been unable to repay. Amin Didi also discovered the printing press and issued sufficient paper money to thoroughly discredit the currency.

On our last evening I asked to do without my official car and guide and walked alone through the clean wide streets of Male. The Imam chanted his evening prayer from the minaret and the people strolled home from their duties. Down at the port the last of the dhonis came scudding in from the sea, their sails etched in crimson against the setting sun. A little boy was sitting by the breakwater, catching small silver fish, and out in the harbour the oil lamps of the buggalows were beginning to glow.

High above me, on a gallery of the old Sultan's Palace, I heard the roll of the sunset drum. Pious Moslems will say that it merely denotes the end of the day, but to many of the islanders it has another and far more ancient

significance. It seems that, back in the dim ages of Maldivian history, a great and voracious dragon lived in the harbour of Male. It did not eat people but it did eat fish, which was almost the same thing, as the people soon starved for lack of sustenance. Then a saintly man came to the island and bewitched the dragon so that it became small enough to fit into a bottle. The saint threw the bottle into the sea but warned the people that, unless they beat the drum every evening, the dragon would escape from the bottle to again devour all their fish.

I rose at six on the last day of our stay in Male and went fishing with Mohamed. A dhoni, with a crew of five, was awaiting us at the breakwater and we were soon scudding out to sea before a stiff breeze. The big fellows — —marlin and swordfish — do not like to surface in rough weather and the prospects did not look encouraging.

Tackle consisted of native-spun jute lines with a breaking strength, Mohamed told me, of over eighty pounds. Hand-beaten copper leaders were then attached and home-made wire hooks. The bait was an entire small silver fish, inside which the hook was cunningly concealed and then bound to the fish with line. We trailed two lines. As all the marlin I have ever tangled with in Cuba and Mexico could take out line from a huge reciprocal-geared reel at better than sixty miles per hour, I thought it wiser not to try and handle one of these hand lines myself. The islanders have hands as tough as shoe leather, but even they occasionally get cut to the bone by the run of a big fish.

The dhoni is one of the most seaworthy boats ever constructed ; it takes the great rolling combers of the Indian Ocean with the ease and assurance of a miniature *Queen Mary*. Soon after we passed through the channel between the coral reef into the open ocean, the wind blew even harder and it seemed to me that we climbed for minutes almost straight up the foam-flecked green hills and then

took a Coney Island roller coaster trip down the yawning abyss on the other side. Such was the skill of the helmsman, however, that we were seldom wet by spray. He handled his single lateen sail perfectly and, even though there was no way to reef it, he was able to pay out the sheet rope and spill enough wind to keep us steady on our course.

Only once did I see the dorsal fin of a big fish riding the waves, but before we could cast bait to it, it was gone. Mohamed told me that, early that week, this crew had hooked and finally pulled aboard, after a four-hour battle, a twelve-foot swordfish. They have no way of weighing their catches but, from the length, I would judge the fish must have been in the neighbourhood of three or four hundred pounds. Harpoons are also carried, but by the time the big fish are close enough to gaff, most of the fight is out of them.

On my arrival back at the palace, I found the porch loaded with presents, the generous gifts of Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi and Mr. Mohamed Didi. There were intricately woven and vividly coloured rush mats from the far southern atolls; scale models of every type of fishing dhoni, complete to the rigging and bone-handled tiller; dozens of examples of the best lacquer-work in the shape of boxes, flower vases and glass-holders. There were models of Male houses, presented by the borah merchants, of such exact scale proportions that tiny pictures were hung on the little porches. But most beautiful of all were the shells. No wonder the ancients used the Maldivian cowries for money. No more perfect examples of the wonders of the sea could be found: there were big rose-coloured conches, russet and white shells, milk-white shells with green tinges and horn-shaped yellow and brown shells from which the islanders carve their graceful spoons.

At eleven-thirty we proceeded to the harbour and, after thanking everyone, took off in the state barge for the Sunderland. Aloft we made several swings over Male and

allowed Irene and Cruickshank to get some fine colour pictures of the town and outlying islands. Then, with real regret, we swung out along the reef on the long trip back to Ceylon.

Since the above was written, two events of far-reaching importance for the islands have occurred at Male. On New Year's Eve, 1953, Amin Didi, assisted by Ibrahim Hilmy Didi and Shashuddeen Hilmy, evaded the custody of his guards on Doonidu island and crossed to Male. News of his escape spread rapidly and, even though the Government took prompt action to protect him, Amin Didi was badly beaten up by a mob. The shock of this incident undoubtedly aggravated his already poor state of health, and despite constant medical attention he died on January 19, 1954, on the island of Vihamanafuri.

With Amin Didi's demise the last vestiges of the Maldives' first and probably last republican Government passed into history. The people wanted no more of it and on March 7, 1954, the Sultanate, in the person of His Highness Ali Amir Mohamed Farid Didi, eldest son of the last late Sultan Designate, was officially restored. My wife and I were pleased to note that our friend, Mr. Ibrahim Ali Didi, was at the same time proclaimed Prime Minister.

The British Government, acting on recommendations made by Cruickshank in his report on the economy of the islands, has recently undertaken to make a grant towards the purchase of materials and equipment for the rehabilitation of the fishing industry, on which their whole economy depends. It is to be hoped that this assistance will enable the simple and peace-loving Maldivians to regain prosperity after the vicissitudes of recent times and that, in the year ahead, they will find in their remote and unique realm greater prosperity than they have known in their long and eventful history.

APPENDIX

The following list of Sinhalese castes was arranged by Professor Ryan. He points out, however, that it is a fallacy to think that all castes stand in specific hierarchy to each other. The only really important point is how the various castes are regarded in the neighbourhood, and there can be considerable difference of opinion depending on the district studied. Where members of a caste are mainly concentrated in a certain area, I have added the words 'low-country' or 'Kandyan'. Finally it must be borne in mind that caste in Ceylon is in a state of transition. Some of the castes listed below are in the process of disappearing and some of the sub-groups are losing their definition within their caste frames.

Modern Castes in Approximate Order of Rank

1. *Goyigama*	Cultivators of the soil	
(*a*) Radala	King's office holders	'good' Goyigamas
(*b*) Mudali	Leaders of the people	
(*c*) Patti	King's cow-herds	
(*d*) Katupulle	King's clerical servants	
(*e*) Nilamakkara	Temple servants	
(*f*) Porovakara	Wood-cutters, axe-men to the King	
(*g*) Vahal	Slaves, household workers to the Radala	
(*h*) Gattara	Outcastes	
(*i*) Guruvo	Conch blowers	
2. *Karava*	(Low Country) Fishermen	
3. *Salagama*	(Low Country) Cinnamon peelers	
(*a*) Hevapanne	Soldiers	
(*b*) Kurundukara	Cinnamon peelers	
4. *Durava*	Toddy tappers	
5. *Navandanna*	Artisans, including smiths	
6. *Hannali*	(Kandyan) Tailors	
7. *Hunu*	Lime burners	
8. *Hena* or *rada*	Washers to higher castes	
9. *Vahumpura*	Jaggery makers	
10. *Hinna*	(Low Country) Washers to Salagama	
11. *Badahala*	Potters	

12. *Panikki*	(Low Country) Barbers
13. *Velli-durayi*	(Kandyan) Guardians of sacred bo trees
14. *Panna-durayi*	(Kandyan) Grass cutters
15. *Barava*	Tom-tom beaters
16. *Batgam Barava*	Tom-tom beaters
17. *Kontadurayi*	Unknown
18. *Batgam*	Possibly king's palanquin bearers
19. *Oli*	Dancers
20. *Pali*	(Kandyan) washers to low castes
21. *Kinnara*	(Kandyan) Mat weavers
22. *Gahala-barava*	(Kandyan) Funeral drummers and executioners
23. *Rodi*	(Kandyan) Outcastes, beggars
24. *Kavikara*	(Kandyan) Devale dancers and chanters
25. *Demala-Gattara*	(Low Country) Tamil outcastes

Note.—The Kavikara and the Demala-Gattara castes are hierarchically unclassed.

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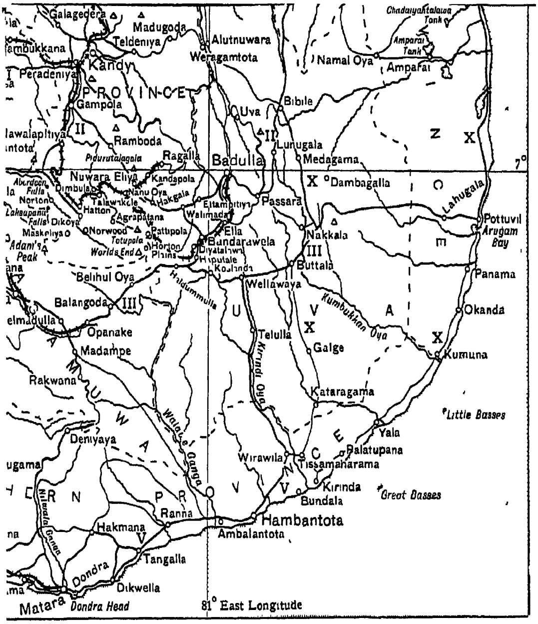

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